



CAREFREE PATH OF DREAMS

BOOK 06

The Plagiarist

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Carefree Path of Dreams

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Synopsis

This is the story of a boy who lived a secluded life in the mountains, tending his farm, rearing his fish, and dreaming his dreams. Eh? Did I suddenly conquer all worlds and become the big boss? Or am I still in a dream?

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Chapter 501: Qiu Liang

The Tantai Family had a high status in society.

Since the mansion could not possibly fit the entire family, a few family members would do jobs outside and fund the family financially.

Tantai Mieming's aunt, Tantai Jueqing was one such person, an exorcist.

She was a beautiful lady and preferred floral clothing. Her skin was fair and she had an elegant demeanour.

Furthermore, Tantai Jueqing was the one and only family member of the Tantai Family who was on friendly terms with Fang Yuan. Sometimes, she even helped out the much-busier Tantai Juexin in teaching Fang Yuan the techniques of exorcism.

Logically speaking, Fang Yuan should be rather close to this aunt of his.

However, the overly-matured Fang Yuan could tell that this lady had ill intentions and was merely wearing a mask.

Although she did not display any signs of any ulterior motives, Fang Yuan trusted his intuition!

"I have nothing else to teach you regarding the identification of plants and pharmaceuticals! You are a genius, Ming!"

Tantai Jueqing squinted her eyes and smiled as she rubbed Fang Yuan's head.

"Aunt Jueqing, can you tell me about the outside world?"

Fang Yuan displayed curiosity a 5-year-old had as he pestered his aunt for more stories about the outside world.

Although he knew that Tantai Jueqing had ill intentions, this was nevertheless still a good opportunity to gather more information about the outside world!

Tantai Jueqing seemed to be on a long break herself after the recent mission.

"Alright!"

Tantai Jueqing brought her hands together. "The outside world is very interesting! There are tall buildings all around! Every night, light from all the buildings come together, displaying a sight which is prettier than a rainbow. There are also a lot of delicacies and entertainment there! The chocolates and figurines which I gave you last time were only the most basic... Other than these, there are also planes which can fly in the sky, and these planes can fly across many other countries in just a single day..."

'This world is so technologically advanced?'

Fang Yuan blinked as he listened intently as though he was longing to see it for himself. 'Also... Why would Tantai Jueqing attempt to make me interested in the outside world? Does she really have an ulterior motive?'

Of course, he knew that Tantai Guijing and the fellow family members would never allow him to leave the mansion.

'However, it's not a bad idea to leave this place...'

Fang Yuan snickered to himself. 'I shall play along with you.'

Although there are many secrets in the Tantai Family which were worth discovering, this was not the time!

In other words, the secrets here were too much for him to handle. Fang Yuan would prefer to expose himself to the outside world first.

Furthermore, Fang Yuan would have to worry about the monthly 'ritual'. It was obviously an attempt to keep things under control! The longer the ritual, the more effective it would be! Unfortunately, Fang Yuan had not restored most of his abilities and could not resist against it.

Since he was underqualified to control the situation, it would only be wise to step out of it.

"Aunt!"

Fang Yuan tugged on Tantai Jueqing's hand and started to sound cringy. "Next time when you leave, bring me along, will you?"

"No way!" Tantai Jueqing smiled sheepishly. "You are a very important person and the Hall of Sacrifice requires you..."

'There she goes again, trying to end her sentence halfway to pique my interest.'

Fang Yuan secretly rolled his eyes.

He knew that he could not continue to plead. After all, the role which he was acting was an abnormal kid.

"Cough cough!"

A few coughs were heard as Tantai Juexin displayed a cold look. "Jueqing, you've said too much. Mieming, please leave with us!"

"Yes!"

Fang Yuan obediently packed up and left the room.

However, as his ears twitched, his sensitive hearing ability allowed him to eavesdrop a little.

"Keke... Brother, what are you afraid of? Are you afraid that he will learn the truth?"

"Enough! This plan is the hope for the entire family. Those old fogeys must fear their death, right? It's a pity that he's too..." Tantai Jueqing's voice sounded excited. "We... will all die!"

"Sister, do you hate us for doing all these?" After a long and awkward silence, Tantai Juexin spoke once more.

"Yes, I hate all of you and I hate this cursed family! I hate myself..."

Tantai Jueqing sounded pitiful as though she was forcing herself

to speak.

"... Are you responsible for the missing pair of scissors?"

"Scissors? The one which Qiu Liang used years ago? Haha... finally, the truth is out?"

...

There was the faint noise of fighting and the information coming from the argument started to interest Fang Yuan. Unfortunately, he saw a few servants walking towards him and felt that it was inappropriate to continue eavesdropping and could only walk away.

"A 20-year cycle? Could this be about the peak of the curse on the family? Also, that pair of scissors..."

The pair of red scissors which Qiu Liang had used to attempt to kill Fang Yuan was ingrained in his memory and Fang Yuan felt an inexplicable vibe just by recalling it.

Now that he thought about it, every single person in the family was not as simple as they seem and that pair of scissors might just be a piece of magical equipment.

"Lost? This would mean that it has been guarded all these while. This is interesting..."

Fang Yuan slowly walked away. Unfortunately, he was already too far from the room and could no longer hear what they were talking about.

"Ah, it's young master Mieming!"

As he entered a garden, he noticed a few servants carrying a rack which was covered with a white cloth. A part of the white cloth was dyed red.

All the servants in the family feared Fang Yuan. Now that they suddenly realised that he was in the garden, they shrieked and released their grip on the rack, allowing it to fall to the ground. A

corpse rolled out from the rack.

This female corpse was wearing a servant's clothing and had a pale look. Her eyes were wide open and there was an obvious cut on her neck, as though she was being sliced by a sharp object.

Just as Fang Yuan gazed towards the corpse, he could feel an indescribable chill down his spine.

"What are you doing there! Quickly clear things up!"

As the housekeeper lectured the servants, he forced a smile as he looked towards Fang Yuan. "Young master Mieming, this place is dirty. It will be best for you to return."

"Oh!"

Fang Yuan quickly agreed, turned around and took his leave.

The housekeeper heaved a sigh of relief. "Did the two of you not take your meals?"

It's not that, Housekeeper Zhang. It's just too scary! We have this recent death and immediately after, we see him..."

"That's right. When a normal child sees a corpse, he will surely feel scared, right? He doesn't even have any reaction at all! The rumours are true..."

"Ahong was fine yesterday and now, she's found dead in her room. That room was locked from in the inside. Could it be... that thing?"

...

Fang Yuan paid no attention to their gossip.

From his birth till now, he had already heard enough of such stories. If he were to investigate every single incident, he would have been exhausted to death.

Of course, the final piece of information was a little more interesting.

"Could it be ghosts?"

Fang Yuan returned to his room and chuckled. "Even this place is no longer safe. I should leave this haunted mansion as soon as possible."

"Of course, the priority would be to improve my abilities!"

At night, Fang Yuan rushed to the spot behind the Hall of Sacrifice as he waited for the appearance of the Ghost Garden.

Ever since he had learnt all about it, he had already planned on using the Ghost Garden for himself.

Now, he was prepared to create a few types of medicine.

"This Hall of Sacrifice..."

Under the dim moonlight, the dark building resembled a black hole which was seemingly trying to absorb everything.

Fang Yuan could sense a pair of prying eyes coming from the Hall of Sacrifice.

"Elder?"

Fang Yuan paid no attention to it and waited for the moon to set before walking into the Ghost Garden.

Oddly-shaped plants created an eerie shuffling noise as though they were welcoming him.

"Human equipment cannot deal with ghosts. Even these plants do not belong to the humans..."

Fang Yuan walked about in the garden. "In reality... the Tantai Family did not share with me their medicinal formulas for the more effective medicines. Now, I am merely creating the basic ones."

"According to the matured plants here, there are only 2 concoctions I can create. One will be the Spiritual Eye Water which will allow normal humans to observe the traces of ghosts. The

second will be a concoction which will mask the traits of a human body, making it harder for the ghosts to detect the person using it."

Fang Yuan had his Fiery Golden Eyes and therefore would not need the Spiritual Eye Water. Therefore, he went straight into creating the other concoction.

"It is a requirement for me to create the entire concoction while I am in the Ghost Garden!"

Fang Yuan arrived at the Ghost Faced Sunflower and pressed on the forehead of the face.

"Sniffle!"

The pale face started to cry in a melodious tone and blood started to tear from her eyes.

Fang Yuan collected the blood with a test tube before adding the powdered seeds of Corpse Vine in. Following which, he added a few more odd ingredients into the mix.

In the test tube, the blood-coloured liquid suddenly turned transparent.

"I've succeeded!"

It was the norm to fail in creating these concoctions. Even elders in charge of making these concoctions would not have such a high probability of success as Fang Yuan had.

"However, I don't know how useful will this be..."

Fang Yuan held his concoction and was about to leave. Suddenly, he felt a chill.

A gold hue flashed in his eyes as he noticed a blurred silhouette.

"Could ghost be more visible in this alternate dimension?"

Fang Yuan revealed a smile on his face. "Am I... trapping myself? However, I must expose myself to... the threats of this world!"

At this point, Fang Yuan drank the concoction in his hands

without a second thought.

A smelly and rotting stench filled his mouth but there were no visible changes to his body.

Taking light breaths, Fang Yuan slowly walked about in the Ghost Garden.

Finally, he could see it. A lady wearing red placed her hands on her hips and like a snake, she slithered on the ground with her shoulders.

The face of the ghost was that of... Qiu Liang

Chapter 502: Awakening

Under the moonlight.

The ghost in red clothes raised her head. She was Qiu Liang, the lady who had died years ago!

She was emotionless and her eyes were wide opened as though she was stubborn. She was squirming on the ground as though she had lost the use of her limbs, turning her into something which resembled a large red snake.

"I cannot do this!"

Just by gazing at her, Fang Yuan was overwhelmed with fear. "If go against her now... I will die! She is not a normal spirit!"

Thinking up to this point, Fang Yuan started to hold his breath and made his way towards the entrance of the Ghost Garden.

He didn't know how long the concoction which hid his human traits could last. His life would be in danger for every moment he spent in the Ghost Garden.

He was getting nearer and nearer the entrance...

As Fang Yuan arrived at the entrance, the red ghost suddenly raised its head and a murderous look flashed in its eyes!

...

In the study room of the Tantai Family.

A group of people gathered in the room. Tantai Juexin and Tantai Jueqing were among the group.

Tantai Guijing appeared even more frail-looking than usual as though he was on the brink of death. In reality, his actual age was only about 50. However, he had such a look because of something which backfired on him in the past.

He cleared his throat and began. "The 20-year cycle is about to

rest. What opinions do you guys have with regards to this?"

Other than Tantai Juexin and a few others, the rest were all old and frail looking as they displayed shock on their faces.

It was a 20-year cycle! This was the curse of the Tantai Family! Everyone with the Tantai blood would not be able to escape. If this were to happen in a cycle of a few years, the Tantai Family would be wiped out and killed, especially the few elders who had already survived a few cycles.

"Didn't we discuss to using 'that' to deal with the curse of the 'Door'? Juexin, do you think he's fit for it?"

A bald elder slowly spoke.

"Second Granduncle..."

Tantai Juexin stood up and appeared vexed. "That thing is the most gifted person I have ever seem. He is only 5 years old now and yet he is already as capable as most other exorcists. However... I did not realise that he was displaying signs of awakening!"

"That's impossible! Unless he has perfect control over it, otherwise, he will not be able to control his 'awakening'!"

A few elders spoke with frustration.

Most of them there were top-notch exorcists and knew the power of ghosts and curses.

Even the strongest human cannot fight against a ghost! Only a curse would be able to deal with another curse!

"This is not a lie and I'm sure all of you know that."

Tantai Juexin replied coldly before returning to his seat.

Everyone remained silent for a while. They all knew the terror which would come with 'awakening'. The calm period now was the most obvious sign of all.

"Cough cough..."

Tantai Guijing continued. "In order to break the curse on us, we need to find that 'Door'. All that we have prepared up till now is not enough! Mieming still needs to mature as well. Therefore, we should stick to our original plan... Of course, if we cannot resist this curse, the only thing we can do will be to sacrifice Mieming."

Everyone remained silent.

At the end, Tantai Guijing suddenly thought of something and asked, "Do we have a lead on the cursed scissors?"

The Tantai Family was a family of exorcists and therefore it was only normal for the family to have a collection of weird objects.

That red scissors was among the collection. It was cursed with a powerful spell which would enable it to harm spirits.

"We do. That pair of scissors will curse whoever it kills, turning the person into a ghost. Only by finding another ghost will the first ghost be freed... We have used a female servant as a bait for the scissors to complete its curse on a new victim. In the next 7 days, it will not come out to harm others. Furthermore, we can use black magic to trace it."

Tantai Juexin toyed around with the dagger in his hands as he calmly explained.

"That's good. Quickly recall it back. After all, it is still useful in dealing with curses."

Tantai Guijing nodded his head. "The meeting is over!"

...

If Fang Yuan were to eavesdrop on the exchanges during the meeting, he would be utterly shocked.

The red pair of scissors cursed by black magic would curse whoever it kills! Qiu Liang did not die under the pair of scissors. Furthermore, the scissors now had a new target and therefore, there would be a safe period of 7 days!

Therefore, the red scissors which he had seen was not the simple cursed red scissors, but 'something else'!

If might just be the thing responsible for the curse over the entire Tantai Family!

After all, Fang Yuan still had Tantai blood in his body.

Although the curse would more likely seek out the elders, there could be exceptions, for instance, Tantai Jueshang!

"Run!"

But for now, Fang Yuan was still clueless.

As soon as he exchanged glances with the female ghost, he knew right away that the ghost had already detected him.

"Bang!"

Decisively, he leapt out even further than a matured adult could and like a gust of wind, he arrived into the real world.

Behind him, the female ghost had disappeared.

Fang Yuan appeared pale and in pain. As he lifted his pants up, he could see a black palm print on his ankle.

"Almost..."

Even though Fang Yuan had already arrived back in his dimension, the sense of danger had not faded away.

"To the Hall of Sacrifice!"

His eyes darted around as he quickly ran towards the dark hall, pushing the door with all his might.

"Who's that? Eh? It's you!"

A skinny old man in black clothing appeared stern as soon as he spotted Fang Yuan. "This is not a place you are suppose to be in!"

Although Fang Yuan only skimmed through the hall, he could already observe most of its interior.

Lanterns lined the walls of the hall and equipment were laid out on the sacrificial table. There were many caskets as well as a single painting scroll hidden in the corner of the hall.

On the painting scroll, the drawing was a... door!

'That is... exactly similar to the door that I saw in the memories of this realm!'

Fang Yuan wanted to take a few more glances at the things around. Suddenly, he felt a sense of confusion.

"What have you angered..."

The old man noticed a red silhouette and his expression changed. Immediately, he plucked a black ring from his finger and threw it towards the ground.

"Bang!"

A layer of black fog appeared, engulfing the old man within. The old man took a few deep breaths and immediately, his body started to rot and within seconds, he became a zombie.

Without a second thought, Fang Yuan turned around and ran for his life. After just a few steps, he could hear a pitiful shriek. It was from that old man!

"What is that?"

Fang Yuan did not slow down. As he arrived at the ancient mansion, he noticed the silhouette of a group of people.

At the same time, the feeling of confusion in him finally disappeared.

"Did that old man become my scapegoat?"

Fang Yuan clenched his fist. He had finally encountered the threats of this realm and could not wait to restore his cultivation!

"I don't want to care anymore. No matter how eerie this realm might seem, I have to begin my experimentation on dream

elemental force!"

...

On the second day, Fang Yuan had received news of the death of the old man. Tantai Juexin had personally delivered this piece of news to Fang Yuan. Evidently, he was suspecting that Fang Yuan might have something to do with his death.

From Tantai Jueqing, Fang Yuan had also obtained information about the scissors which was cursed with black magic.

"What was 'that' which I encountered last night?"

Fang Yuan sat on his bed and started to recall what had happened last night with a look of confusion growing on his face. "Something is not right. To think about it, that female ghost's face was a little blurred and did not seem to be Qiu Liang's face... Could the ghost have taken advantage of my mind to cause me to hallucinate? All because I have imagined about Qiu Liang being cursed by the scissors, and that is why I have imagined her to be the ghost in red?"

"Regardless, I am sure that the appearance of these ghosts have something to do with the Demonic Heart Realm!"

"This realm is even more affected by the Demonic Heart Realm compared to Da Qian!"

Fang Yuan clenched his fist. "In order to resist against such pollution and foreign entities from the Demonic Heart Realm, I must regain my ability to harness dream elemental force! Furthermore... it feels a little different here!"

All along, Fang Yuan was already interested in the other paths of the Demonic Heart Realm.

Although Shang Hou did not have the records of such paths on him, every path would have its foundations rooted in dream elemental force! After obtaining the many dream master records, Fang Yuan had his own theory.

Of course, in a thousand of his ideas, 999 of them would be likely to be useless and could even result in him suffering an irreversible damage. The last idea might not be entirely safe as well. Therefore, dream masters had completely given up trying to explore the other paths.

After experiencing the dream dao, why would the dream masters be interested in any other paths?

Being in another realm was the best opportunity for Fang Yuan to pick off where his research had left off.

Experimenting on himself would surely be more effective than using other dream masters as experimental products!

The weirdness of this realm and the fact that it had been polluted by the Demonic Heart Realm further affirmed Fang Yuan's thinking.

"The first step is always the same, and that is to sense the dream elemental force."

Fang Yuan closed his eyes and weird shapes started to appear in his consciousness.

These shapes started to float around and gather together, forming an inverted triangle.

The triangle was quickly formed which could be due to the fact that the realm had long been polluted by the Demonic Heart Realm. With that, streaks of evolved dream element force started to descend.

"Purple?"

Fang Yuan was stunned. "Isn't the dream elemental force of the Demonic Heart Realm silver?"

In that instant, an even more drastic change happened.

His body started to absorb the dream elemental force greedily as though a desert had come across a flowing river.

"This is..."

Completely submerged in the process, Fang Yuan did not notice that his body was turning pale. Following which, the temperature of the room started to go down as well.

This was not the physical temperature, but a higher-dimensional cold sensation only felt by the soul.

"Ah!"

A shriek had jolted Fang Yuan out from his trance.

He quickly came out of the room and realised that a tray of food was scattered across the floor.

"What happened?"

Fang Yuan frowned as his eyes glistened.

On the ground, there were fine prints which resembled the shape of a human!

"This force... it is indeed representative of inauspiciousness!"

Chapter 503: Revelation

"Name: Fang Yuan (Tantai Mieming)

Essence: 1.0 (100)

Spirit: 1.0 (100)

Magic: 3.0 (100)

Profession: ???

Cultivation: ???

Technique: ???

Skill: [Medicine (Level 3)], [Botany (Level 6)], [Fiery Golden Eyes (Level 1)], Unknown Physical Property"

...

Fang Yuan whipped his stats window out and observed the changes.

With an Essence of 1, it would mean that Fang Yuan had the physical qualities comparable to that of a full-grown adult. This was shocking, considering that he was a 5-year-old child.

In this realm, humans were extremely restricted and some of the stats in the stats window were sealed. Even Fang Yuan felt that it was difficult to improve himself.

'It would be reasonable if my stats are sealed up due to the existence of a powerful being from the Demonic Heart Realm.....'

Fang Yuan once again corrected his understanding of this realm. "This realm must be hiding a huge secret! It might just be related to that 'door'!"

The scene which Fang Yuan had observed while he was traversing to this realm and the abnormalities in this realm made him certain of this.

If he could find the source which caused everything that is

happening, he might just understand the greatest secret of the Demonic Heart Realm!

"Also, what does it mean by 'Unknown Physical Property'? Why is it classified directly under my 'Skill' section..."

Fang Yuan predicted that the mutated dream elemental force which he had previously absorbed was like a key, unlocking the potential of his own body.

"What's happening?"

It was obvious that someone was spying on Fang Yuan's living quarters. Not long after, Tantai Juexin quickly rushed over with a look of anticipation and fear as he gazed upon the mess before him.

"I don't know!"

Fang Yuan remained expressionless and spoke the truth.

"Where is Cuihe?"

"Missing!"

"Head to the study!"

Tantai Juexin had an unsettled look on his face as he chased Fang Yuan away before calling for Tantai Jueqing. "I cannot detect Cuihe's energy. I'm afraid that she is dead... Your ability can be used here. Take a look."

"I know."

Tantai Jueqing bent over and caressed the mess on the ground. Suddenly, her eyes turned white.

She had seen it. Cuihe was carrying a tray of food. As she arrived at Fang Yuan's living quarters, she slowly opened the door.

Behind the door, it was...

"Ah!"

A high-pitched shriek was heard. Tantai Jueqing fell to the ground as though she had fallen from a great height and her throat

was in pain.

Unknowingly, a dagger was pressed on her neck and stream of blood trickled down from the wound.

"You... tried to kill me!"

Tantai Juexin retorted as he calmly kept the dagger. "What did you exactly see?"

"Keke... I didn't see anything!"

Tantai Jueqing smiled sheepishly which made Tantai Juexin feel a chill in his heart. "However, I am certain that Tantai Mieming's physical property is awakened!"

"Is that so? Finally..."

Tantai Juexin gave off a weird expression and remained silent for a while. "I'll tell Father about this!"

"Right, those old fogeys fear him, right? After all, even the Uncle in-charge of guarding the Hall of Sacrifice is now dead. It's good to know that he was once the one with the strongest self-defence!"

Tantai Jueqing chuckled. "The both of us might just die this time! Therefore, the elders will surely go all out and go ahead with the plan now, right?"

"You... you are mad!"

Tantai Juexin glared at his sister and spoke with confidence.

"That might be the case!"

Tantai Jueqing toyed with her long hair and seemed unfazed. "Even normal human beings will turn mad if they were to be born in such a family!"

...

"Unique Physical Property? What is that?"

Fang Yuan felt confused as he gazed at the faded handprint on his ankle.

This was the injury he had sustained from the ghost last night. Even after applying his family's traditional concoction, his condition did not improve. However, as soon as he awakened his physical property, the entire handprint started to fade away and he quickly recovered from it.

"I can even recover from an injury sustained from a ghost..."

Fang Yuan intently focused on his own body and felt a little confused. "I can feel that my body is now able to absorb even the mutated dream elemental force, turning it into something I have yet to understand... It seems like the more dream elemental force I absorb, the stronger this physical property will become?"

He soon arrived at the study and started to prepare for his lessons.

At this point in time, Tantai Juexin walked over with a straight face. "Do your preparations properly. We will go through the 'ritual' tonight!"

"I understand!"

Fang Yuan could detect his abnormal emotions. However, he still calmly replied his father.

"Hehe... Little Ming." As soon as Fang Yuan returned to his room, he noticed Tantai Jueqing sitting on his bed. Her small feet were wearing a pair of bright-red leather shoes which were knocking on the side of his bed.

"Aunt Jueqing!"

Fang Yuan paid his greetings.

"Are you going to go through the 'ritual' tonight?"

"That's right."

"Let me tell you, tonight will be different! Furthermore, do you know about your 'birth'?"

Tantai Jueqing leaned towards Fang Yuan and started to whisper

into his ear.

Although the entire act was seductive, thinking about how Fang Yuan was still a 5-year-old kid made it seem inappropriate. Fang Yuan could only roll his eyes inside.

"My birth?"

He acted as though he was confused.

"Your parents, they hate you! Especially your mother... pay her a visit."

Tantai Jueqing chuckled. "Are you not confused as to why she does not visit you frequently? Go pay her a visit. You know the location of her house..."

'This woman!?'

Fang Yuan's pupils contracted and his face remained emotionless. 'Is she cursing me? To try to take control over me?'

"It's successful!"

Gazing at the puppet-like Fang Yuan, Tantai Jueqing was elated. "Go! Go and pay Su Xin a visit and retrieve the red scissors for me!"

"Pa!"

In the next instant, her wrist was being held tightly by Fang Yuan. "Although I don't know what you are trying to do, I'm sure you have ill intentions! Unfortunately, I don't want to continue playing with you!"

At this point in time, in his stats window, the words which represented his Unique Physical Property started to glow.

"Screech!"

Although her wrist was being held by a child's hand, Tantai Jueqing's face was filled with extreme pain.

Dark purple streaks started to spread from her wrist as though she was experiencing frostbite.

"Shing!"

A knife flashed past as Tantai Jueqing severed her entire arm. At her wound, the blood froze up and did not drop a single bit.

"It seems like... I've underestimated you!"

Tantai Jueqing snickered. "What do you want to do? Kill me?"

"I don't have such a plan. I only want to leave this place..."

Fang Yuan sighed.

He was determined to leave this place since the encounter with the ghost.

Such a scary ghost was not something he could deal with right now. Furthermore, looking at how things were, the ritual at night might be troublesome.

Considering his current abilities, every outcome seemed like it would be disadvantageous to him. Therefore, leaving was the best plan.

He could slowly explore the secrets of this family after he had grown up.

"This has always been what you wanted from the start, right?"

"That's right! I wanted to screw up the preparations of the family and that's why I'm convincing you to leave. Otherwise, it would also be good if you could encounter that thing in the Hall of Sacrifice as well! However, now, my mind is changed." Tantai Jueqing gazed at Fang Yuan. "I want to tell you the truth!"

"Shut up!"

The door was struck open. Tantai Juexin, Tantai Guijing and a few other elders rushed into the room. "Jueqing, what do you think you are doing?"

"Keke... I've had enough of all of you. Why am I subjected to your control since birth? Like a mere puppet of the family?"

Tantai Jueqing started to laugh hysterically. "Now, I want to screw all of these up, because... I want to! Tantai Mieming, do hear me carefully. You..."

"Ding!"

A knife struck towards Tantai Jueqing, only to be obstructed in mid-air.

Fang Yuan had long observed Tantai Juexin's knife techniques and started to speak with a cold tone. "Let her continue!"

"As my elder brother, you don't even care about me!"

Tantai Jueqing spoke with a deadly tone. "The truth is that... you are not human! You are an 'existence' created by the Tantai Family's curse. Your birth resulted in the death of an innocent child's soul! You possessed his body!"

"So... this is the truth!"

Fang Yuan mumbled under his breath. He had already thought about this and Tantai Jueqing had merely proved his predictions.

The curse which the Tantai Family had been suffering from was indeed the more powerful amongst curses. To deal with ghosts, one could only use ghosts!

Therefore, the Tantai Family had always been conducting secret experiments. Finally, when Tantai Juexin's wife was about to give birth, a few elders of the family had sacrificed their lives to curse the unborn baby and thereby calling a true evil ghost into the baby's body in an attempt to create a tool to resist against the curse on the family!

The evil ghost would go on to possess the baby's body as a 'human' and exist in the world. From there, the ghost would be controlled by the family!

The reason why Tantai Mieming's mother, Su Xin had hated Fang Yuan and did not care for him was because Fang Yuan was

not her son, but the murderer of her son!

This was why Tantai Juexin had felt conflicted all along!

Why was the Tantai Family so scared of Fang Yuan? Why would Qiu Liang want to kill Tantai Mieming with the cursed red scissors? This was because, in their eyes, Tantai Mieming was just a... ghost!

"This is the truth, great!"

Fang Yuan clapped his hands and revealed a wide grin.

"You..."

This expression was not what Tantai Jueqing had expected.

"Do you expect me to break down and become crazy, or start a killing spree?"

Calmly, Fang Yuan continued. "To me, this is a good thing. At least I don't have to feel sorry!"

If Fang Yuan had reincarnated as someone else's child, there would be consequences.

Now, even his parents were treating him like a powerful ghost and a murderer. They had no feelings for him and therefore, Fang Yuan felt less restricted to do what he wanted to do.

He could also leave the family without hesitation.

"But, where did the ghost which they had summoned go to? Has it escaped? Could something go wrong during the ritual? Or..."

Fang Yuan thought about all the possibilities as a chill went down his spine.

Chapter 504: Spirit Sealing

"I am a... ghost?! Or should I say, I have a ghost inside me? Could I be sharing my body with a ghost?"

Fang Yuan's thoughts were confused.

"It's impossible!"

He tried to ignore the possibilities of a ghost in him. "If this is true, how can I not be aware of it?"

The more he thought about it, the more he would think about the incident where the servant who was bringing food to his room had mysteriously disappeared and was once again uncertain about the facts.

"Family head! What's happening?"

The few elders realised that Fang Yuan's reaction was unexpected. "Is he really awakened?"

It would be normal if Fang Yuan were to go on a killing spree if he was a real ghost. After all, a ghost would naturally hate the living.

Therefore, Tantai Mieming's reaction was not normal.

This would mean that all their previous sacrifices were naught, which made them start to panic.

"He must have awakened! Otherwise, how would he be able to freeze Jueqing? We know how strong Jueqing is!"

Tantai Guijing gazed at her severed hand and his eyelid started to twitch. "However, he is able to perfectly control his powers! This is unbelievable!"

His face was filled with excitement as he glared at Fang Yuan. "Regardless, we have given you this body for you to inhabit! It feels good to be human once again, right? For this, shouldn't you feel obliged to help us? After all, you are still a part of the Tantai

Family and are still under the family curse! Helping us would also mean to help yourself!"

Tantai Guijing was a sly fox. He had already planned for all these from the moment they had guided the ghost into this body.

Whoever gets the blood of the Tantai Family would be cursed! Even if the person were to change a body in the future, the curse would still be there!

If changing a body would allow them to break free from the curse, the Tantai Family would have done so long ago. This was an unbreakable curse!

"In order to remove this curse, we need to go to the 'Door'. Tonight, we shall open the netherworld..."

Tantai Guijing's face became flushed with excitement.

"I refuse!"

Fang Yuan was decisive. "I want to leave this place. Of course, I will promise you that I will return in 20 years time to help you resolve this problem!"

Of course, Fang Yuan was interested about the 'Door'. Furthermore, this would be the secret behind the curse on the Tantai Family.

Although he knew that the family would reject his request, Fang Yuan would still nevertheless made his request known.

"Leave? For 20 years?"

All of their expressions changed. "That's impossible. You are the tool which we created. You will have to listen to our orders!"

"If that is so... I'm sorry, the discussion is over."

Fang Yuan shrugged his shoulders.

"It seems like we've been treating you too well, and you have forgotten something... We have allowed you to possessed our

family member's body for us to be able to control you!"

An elder stood out with a cold look. "Leader... do it!"

Without waiting for Guijing to speak, he immediately retrieved a bronze bell and shook it firmly.

"Clang! Clang!"

The bell appeared ancient-looking and there were many carvings on the outside. On the surface of the bell, there was a layer of green rust. With a firm shake, the bell gave off a distinct ring.

"It's not too bad. Continue sounding it!"

Fang Yuan appeared indifferent.

"How is this possible?"

The elder opened his eyes wide. "I have poisoned you with 13 types of poisonous worms. How can you remain unaffected?"

Fang Yuan snickered.

Every month during the ritual, the Tantai Family had always wanted to deal with Fang Yuan. Of course, he would have to think of a solution to resist.

These poisonous worms were of the lowest quality and were flushed out of Fang Yuan's system as soon as the rituals were over.

Although Fang Yuan did not display his might in the past, having the willpower of a True Divine would allow him to gain delicate control over his own body, up to the point where a normal human would not be able to imagine.

'The only problem is... I am able to purge the visible poisonous worms but not the invisible ones.'

Fang Yuan thought to himself as his pair of hands started to shake.

"It is still effective!"

The few elders were absolutely sure of it as they took out their

weird equipment. Some of them started to chant their own matras and one of the elders even started to shout loudly. "Head... If you don't want to die, then do it!"

"Sigh..."

Tantai Guijing sighed before taking out a mirror and pointing it towards Fang Yuan.

In the mirror, there was an image of a 5-year-old kid which resembled Fang Yuan. However, the child remained emotionless as he started to stretch his hands out towards Fang Yuan.

In the real world, Fang Yuan remained motionless as though he was desolated.

"This is indeed the powerful inherited treasure of the family head. The Ghost Calming Mirror will be able to stun even the most powerful ghost!"

The rest of the elders were elated as they quickened their actions.

A rune was printed on Fang Yuan's body and it started to spread like an earthworm. Within moments, it had already covered more than half of Fang Yuan's body.

The Tantai Family were experts in dealing with ghosts and had many tricks up their sleeves.

They were using their most powerful techniques against this one.

Every month, they would smear fresh blood on Tantai Meiming in an attempt to curse him! It was an extremely dangerous act on its own and even elders would risk death doing it. Furthermore, it would attract all kinds of supernatural dangers.

However, the effects were astonishing.

Just as the rune was almost covering Fang Yuan's entire face, there was a dim glow in his eye.

"The best outcome would be to let him willingly help is. Unfortunately... we can only use our last resort, using him as the

tool to allow us to complete our curse on the 'Door'!"

Tantai Guijing sighed. "Prepare to... open the netherworld! Also, lock Jueqing up."

All the elders were overwhelmed with emotions of all sorts.

Outside, many members of the Tantai Family were already waiting. They were donned in a black attire and held tools in their hands as they appeared well-prepared for what was about to come next.

As soon as they heard the order, they immediately took action.

Tantai Guijing and the rest brought Fang Yuan to the Hall of Sacrifice.

The place of connection to the netherworld was there!

"Woooo!"

A bewildering fog appeared in the surroundings. It covered the sky and light could only seep through the fog. It was as though they had arrived in another world.

'They... They don't intend to remove the curse. Instead, they are treating me as a sacrifice to tide through this cycle!'

Fang Yuan's consciousness was still attempting to struggle in the final moments.

The Tantai Family had a few intentions as they watched Fang Yuan grow. If Fang Yuan was able to mature, they would risk it all to attempt to remove the curse.

However, this cycle seemed especially dangerous and even the head and the elders were not confident of tiding through it. Therefore, they had prepared to sacrifice him to mitigate the effects on themselves.

'I think that I will not be the only one entering the netherworld this time!'

Fang Yuan could sense a huge danger approaching. 'If I cannot escape... I will die!'

'I have no other choice!'

He had made up his mind. Absorbing the mutated dream elemental force, his willpower started to focus on the question marks in his stats window.

"Buzz! Buzz!"

The entire stats window started to shake violently. In an instant, the unknown fog started to dissipate and the question marks beside his techniques turned into a new number and more information flooded the stats window:

'Active Physical Property - Spirit Sealing Body!'

'Spirit Sealing Body (1st Grade): Your body is a weapon which is able to seal evil ghosts. You will be able to seal any ghost that you come into contact with into your body! You have activated the 1st Grade, and the capacity for sealing evil ghosts: 1! You can choose to release the ghost!'

"According to this realm, since souls and curses cannot be destroyed, this ability to seal ghosts in me might just be the most powerful..."

Fang Yuan felt a little confused. "How did it appear?"

The advent of evil ghosts would surely not bring with them the counter to their own kind. Fang Yuan knew himself and knew that this was not a skill of Tantai Mieming's, but his own.

"Could it be that... I have the blood of the Tantai Family?"

The Tantai Family was a renowned family of exorcists. Their blood would have the unique gene which might activate certain abilities in their descendants.

After eliminating all the possibilities, even though this explanation might sound absurd, it was the only one!

"Initially, Tantai Juexin and Su Xin's child would have the greatest potential among the people of the Tantai Family. He would be able to awaken the property to seal spirits, becoming the last hope of his family!"

The blood of the Tantai Family already had the potential to mutate by itself. It was only normal for the ability to counter ghosts to be mutated from the people of the Tantai Family.

Fang Yuan had even suspected that this child might just be a Fate Soul created by the realm's last ditch attempt to save itself!

Unfortunately, the Tantai Family was unaware of this and had decided to curse this child, using it as a tool to fight against the invasion of evil spirits!

This would be akin to destroying their own hope! What an irony!

"Although the true spirit of Tantai Mieming has already been killed by the fellow elders, the evil ghost which they have summoned must have been sealed by my physical property to my advantage?"

Fang Yuan was about to figure out the complete truth to the secrets of his birth.

It was the 'truth' that even Tantai Guijing was unaware about!

"The Fate Souls created by the realm would always be estranged. The will of this realm would either have been destroyed or have gone crazy..."

"But now, my survival depends on it."

"The control methods of the Tantai Family will be able to control me as a human being, but it will surely not be able to control the evil ghost which I am about to release!"

Fang Yuan finally understood something. At that moment where he had awakened his own physical property, he must have likely to accidentally released the evil ghost, causing the unlucky servant's

death.

"Spirit Sealing Body will allow be to seal the evil ghost in me and therefore allowing me to use its powers? Interesting!"

In Fang Yuan's consciousness, he released his tyrannical willpower. "Since this is so... I shall release you!"

In the real world.

The zombie-like Tantai Mieming suddenly stopped in his tracks. The black earthworm print started to subside from his skin.

"This is not good!"

Tantai Guijing was shocked. With that, he quickly took a glance at his own mirror.

Blood started to gush out from his mirror. Tantai Mieming's image was undergoing a certain change.

The young kid was growing. He grew taller and stronger and finally... he became a mature young adult.

His facial features were blurred and he was wearing a white shirt. His skin was dark-green as though he was frozen to death.

"How is this possible? He is no longer a human, but a real... ghost!"

Chill vibes began to fill his heart.

This was true horror...

Chapter 505: Departure

"Juexin, now!"

Tantai Guijing quickly retreated as he hollered. His actions were nimble and unlike that of an old man.

Tantai Juexin's face was gloomy. A dagger covered in all sorts of inscriptions appeared on his hand and he charged towards Fang Yuan.

This dagger was one of the top 5 magical weapons in the Tantai Family! It possessed extremely strong cursing powers. A normal ghost would be completely dispersed by it and would disappear for a long period of time.

However, due to the indestructible characteristic of ghosts, they could not be completely killed.

Of course, the stronger the curse was, the more dangerous it was.

At this instant, Tantai Juexin's right hand which was wielding the dagger had already turned into ghastly bones.

"Slash!"

The dagger glided across Tantai Mieming's figure. However, there was no blood at all. A black shadow flashed past.

"Eagle Claw, strike!"

Tantai Juexin felt an immense pain at his abdomen. Even his strong and experienced body could not withstand such pain and he fell to the ground.

At the same time, a small silhouette moved rapidly around like a snake and dodged a few arrows.

'Tantai Family's tools are mainly used against ghosts. Of course, even if normal human experts meet such weapons, they will still immediately lose control of their mind and be slaughtered. But, I am different!'

Fang Yuan had already understood most of Tantai Family's exorcism techniques. Furthermore, his physical property was astounding. He could even use an evil ghost to attract the firepower!

Fang Yuan swiftly climbed over a wall. His body was already as light and nimble as a swallow. After he climbed over the wall and turned his head back, he saw the figure of the man that appeared to be frozen to death moving about within the family elders.

That man was different from Fang Yuan; he was really a ghost! Also, this man was definitely way beyond normal ghosts. Else, why would there be great expectations from the family for him to go against the curse of the door?

"Woong! Woong!"

An extremely chilly forcefield opened up. It was as though this realm had just turned into a world of ice and snow.

"Elder Seven, Eighteen?"

With just a breath, two family elders died at once. One of their body cracked into pieces while the other's head fell down. The only similar thing was that purple-black frostbites appeared on both their bodies!

If this evil ghost was not present to hinder these family elders, these family elders would have immediately activated the other tricks they planted beforehand and be able to cause great trouble to Fang Yuan.

"This side... after climbing over this wall, it's the kitchen area! It's the least guarded!"

Fang Yuan quickly climbed over the walls and alleys. He had already known the landscape of the family mansion in and out. Thus, he could directly avoid numerous dangers and quickly arrived at the outermost wall.

"Eh?"

Suddenly, a terrifying undulation erupted behind him.

Fang Yuan turned around and looked towards the Hall of Sacrifice. A nebulous feeling kept spreading from there. Even the building began to turn illusionary.

"The netherworld? The curse of the door has erupted in advance?"

Even if Fang Yuan were to turn back and return now, he could not salvage the situation. Thus, he still decided to leave.

"The outermost wall is the Tantai Family's last barrier, or should I say, a layer of enchantment! I'm definitely what it's guarding against!"

Just by going near the wall, the cursed earthworm prints on Fang Yuan's body began to activate. It was obvious that he was targeted.

"Physical destruction is totally useless... it might even be transferred away directly... To destroy it, I can only rely on the power of a ghost."

A cold smile appeared on Fang Yuan's face. His pupils gleamed with a golden light.

He could sense that the powerful ghost he released was already nearby!

"The seal on the evil ghost released by my Spirit Sealing Body isn't really removed. After a period of time, he will still be dragged back into my body..."

Fang Yuan observed the surroundings intently, "Of course, such a release was very dangerous too. This is because the powerful ghost released will definitely want to kill me in order to obtain real freedom!"

The usage of the Spirit Sealing Body was not without risks.

Furthermore, every time an evil ghost was released, it was like walking on a tightrope!

Of course, there was still some advantage in facing such an evil ghost that had been sealed before. For example, his sensing ability would be heightened.

Additionally, with the special ability of Fiery Golden Eyes, Fang Yuan could immediately see the footprints coming from the east side of the ground.

"His spiritual aura... has become weaker!"

By linking together his thoughts, Fang Yuan was even more shocked.

"He's severely injured just from that short moment he had contact with the curse behind that door? What exactly is the curse of that door?"

Suddenly, the footprints had already arrived in front of Fang Yuan.

An immense sense of danger struck.

"Here!"

Fang Yuan immediately turned around. A swirl emerged in front of his chest as he reached out both his arms.

A purple-black evil ghost appeared and was immediately devoured by the swirl in front of Fang Yuan's chest.

"It's over!"

Fang Yuan looked at his arms. A black coloured layer had appeared on his arms and his arms went stiff. It was as though he was frostbitten.

"This physical property still has its dangers!"

With no hesitation, Fang Yuan placed both his arms on the wall and climbed over it.

"Bloop!"

It was as though he crossed through a layer of water. Wilderness

appeared before Fang Yuan's eyes. There was a dense forest not far away and a small road could be vaguely seen there.

"After making use of some of the evil ghost's spiritual force, I indeed broke through the enchantment... Although the price I paid was to be frostbitten on both my arms!"

Fang Yuan looked behind. The entire Tantai Old Mansion had turned illusionary at this moment.

The faint silhouette of a door appeared in the centre of the mansion. It actually devoured the entire mansion!

Where the mansion once stood was now flat grounds. There were no buildings on it at all.

"It's pulled into the netherworld? But with Tantai Family's foundation and expertise, and this mansion's defence, they could definitely survive for a while even though... many will die!"

If Fang Yuan was powerful enough, he might have chosen to stay and explore with Tantai Family. But now, he still turned around and walked away without hesitation.

"A new world, here I come..."

Fang Yuan looked at the sun in the skies and his eyes glistened.

...

Chen Residences.

The owner of Chen Residences was Chen Xinbo. Chen Xinbo was a successful businessman and he was said to have a net worth of over 8 digits. However, he retired at the peak of his career and built the residences in the rural village. He also brought along his family to live in seclusion.

Currently, Chen Xinbo, who was already 50 plus years old, had an uneasy look on his face as he looked at the person in front of him.

"Detective Ma, I'll leave everything to you!"

"Rest assured! Mister Chen!"

This Detective Ma was a 30 plus years old man. He was donned in a jacket shirt and he had a pair of glasses on his face. He was astute and sharp looking. He then continued, "My detective corporation is meant to handle such troubles. You can be assured that I will settle everything related to the paranormal!"

There was a 6 years old girl beside him dressed in a cute princess dress. She had two braids and was licking a round lollipop. After hearing such, she rolled her eyes.

Of course, that expression of hers was not noticed by Chen Xinbo. Even if he saw her doing that, he would not be bothered.

Chen Xinbo grabbed Detective Ma's hand shakily as though he saw his saviour, "Of course... I've heard about you from the newspaper! As long as you can settle the abnormalities in this area, the rewards would definitely satisfy you!"

"Tell me about what happened first! The more detailed, the better!"

Detective Ma raised his glasses.

"Okay. About a month ago, the subordinates of my residences said they saw the figure of a woman in white clothes... I obviously did not believe at first, but recently, her appearances became more and more frequent. I even saw her with my own eyes last week. Ever since that day, one of my servants disappeared. Even the police could not find her..."

Chen Xinbo sighed and rubbed his eyes.

"From then on, everyone in the residences was living in fear. Even I couldn't handle these ghost rumours... thus, I approached your detective corporation."

"Female ghost in white clothes? Understood. What is the name of your missing servant? Can I take a look at her room later?"

Detective Ma replied.

"Of course you can!"

A tinge of happiness appeared on Chen Xinbo's face, "Detective Ma, you have travelled here from afar, please take a good rest and have lunch first before starting work!"

Chen Xinbo left with his brows slightly loosened and hands behind his back.

"Clang!"

Detective Ma closed the door. He had an excited look on his face, "Haha... Xiaoling, you heard that? We are rich! That's why I said, in such times, who would notice you if you don't put up advertisements? This Chen Xinbo had obviously done bad deeds and is just scaring himself. Hehe... watch how I bleed his money!"

"Yes, yes, yes..."

The little girl stopped licking her lollipop and rolled her eyes, "You looked for people to make up stories on the newspaper just to attract such spendthrifts!"

"Hehe... there's no case in this world that can't be solved by me!"

Detective Ma was filled with pride. He then looked at the little girl ingratiatingly, "... As long as you help me! Xiaoling... you must help your father this time! Next time, I will give you 10 more lollipops every month!"

"At least 20 more!"

"I can't, you must think about the cost required to run our corporation. At most 15 more!"

"Deal!"

Ma Xiaoling grinned from ear to ear. However, at the next moment, she became serious, "But, daddy, I'm afraid it wouldn't be so simple here!"

It was really suspicious for such a normal little girl to think so deeply. However, Detective Ma who knew her daughter was mature for her age was not bothered, "How is it not simple, isn't it just someone acting as a ghost to scare people?"

"No... I suspect there might be a real 'ghost' here!"

A tinge of terror flashed past Ma Xiaoling's face.

"What?"

Detective Ma almost jumped up and his volume increased by folds as he circled around, "What a loss! If I knew there were really ghosts here, I should have asked for more rewards from him..."

"Isn't it too late to regret?"

Ma Xiaoling shrugged her shoulders. Suddenly, a white shadow flashed past her eyes.

It was the figure of a woman. Below her long hair was a pair of blood-red eyes.

"AHH!!!"

Ma Xiaoling screamed and hugged onto Detective Ma's leg like a koala bear.

"What's wrong?"

Detective Ma turned and saw nothing.

"This place... this place is very dangerous! Let's leave!"

Ma Xiaoling grabbed tightly.

"We can't, I already promised him. We can't destroy the reputation of our detective corporation here!"

Detective Ma was troubled-looking as he continued, "Also, without this money, we can't even pay the rent for our corporation. We will be homeless next month!"

Chapter 506: Investigations

The missing servant was Xia He.

Her room was neat and tidy. There was not a single speck of dust to be seen. Detective Ma examined a photo frame. The photo in it was a smiling young lady with two dimples by her cheeks. "What a pity..."

After having a sumptuous lunch, he started on his detective works.

The first stop was the servant's room.

"How is it? Did you find anything?"

After examining every single thing in the room to its finest detail, Detective Ma gazed towards Xiaoling with anticipation.

This daughter of his was rumoured to possess the Yin Yang Eye. She was able to see things others could not and was being utilized by Detective Ma as his own secret weapon.

"Nope..."

Ma Xiaoling spoke in a soft voice. She still seemed to be in shock after seeing that white shadow previously.

Previously, she only used her Yin Yang Eye to help her father pick up clues in the crime scene, for she was able to examine things up to an incredible detail.

This was the first time she had encountered a ghost!

"If that is so, let's walk around the building!"

Detective Ma was in deep thoughts. "We could have some findings there... Interestingly, Mister Chen has a background. I found out that his jade business was rather large in the past. However, as his business peaked, he unknowingly pulled out and brought his family here to live in seclusion... Eh, why have we not seen his family members? Let's ask him!"

"You must be talking about Missus Chen and Young Mistress!"

The housekeeper, Uncle Chen wore a tailored western suit and a tie. His hair was perfectly combed. As soon as he heard that Detective Ma was about to enquire about the whereabouts of Mister Chen's family members, he quickly replied. "Because of this incident, the both of them are scared to their wits and have already returned to the city!"

"Ah, I see!"

Detective Ma nodded his head but inside, he was exclaiming to himself. 'This is suspicious indeed!'

If a normal person were to encounter a haunted house like this, even if they were not superstitious, they would still shift elsewhere to live first, right? This had to be especially so for the rich.

However, Mister Chen Xinbo had decided to stay behind. His act was even more suspicious after considering the fact that someone had just gone missing.

"Sigh... Missus Chen had advised Mister Chen before she left. However, he was insistent in staying behind and claims that he wants to accompany Elder Mistress!"

Uncle Chen added.

"So, it seems like another mistress is unwilling to leave!"

Detective Ma nodded his head. The reason for her unwillingness to leave was most likely that she was either brave or that she was showing an attitude.

"Alright, we will like to take a look at your residences. Housekeeper, please lead the way for us."

"No problem! Mister Chen has reminded us to provide assistance to you whenever possible!"

Uncle Chen revealed a wide smile as he led the way for the duo to start their inspections.

The residence was huge. Other than the main living room, the study and the bedrooms, there was also a backyard, a horse stable and a kitchen for the servants. There was even enough rooms for each servant to have their own.

"Master is... too kind. He always fought for the best for us servants and was willing to fork out the money to expand this place so that we can have better living conditions."

Uncle Chen sighed. After bringing Detective Ma around the garden, he brought him to the master bedroom.

The corridors were paved with high-quality red sandalwood and art pieces decorated the shelves along the corridor. There were old paintings hung up on the walls as well and the entire residences had an artistic vibe to it. Chen Xinbo must have been a person who appreciated art.

"This..."

Detective Ma noticed the jade pieces displayed on a shelf. Through the glass panel, he could see the brilliant green hue of the jades. "Are these uncut? Straight from the emerald quarry?"

"Keke... Detective Ma, you have good taste. This piece is one of Master's most valued treasure!"

Uncle Chen chuckled as he pointed towards one of the gems. "This rock variant is extremely valuable. It was mixed together with a few worthless rocks before Master identified and bought it. He had a friend who offered 8 million for it, but Master nevertheless rejected the offer."

"8... 8 million?"

Detective Ma's mouth was agape. It took a few moments for him to snap out of his trance as he swallowed his saliva.

If not for the fact that security was tight here, he might even think of stealing the rock.

"Of course, that offer was only an estimate since the rock is still intact. Therefore, it's value is still uncertain. Who knows, it might be filled with worthless rocks..."

Uncle Chen laughed. "However, some people like this thrill! Detective Ma, do you have knowledge of emerald?"

"Cough cough... Of course!"

Detective Ma straightened his back and appeared serious. "The crystal emeralds have a unique power of the mind. The people of the West use it for divination."

"Keke..."

Uncle Chen forced a smile.

The topic was on the value of the gems. Why would anyone talk about anything related to the supernatural?

"Father..."

At this point in time, Ma Xiaoling tugged at his pants. She had made a discovery.

"What have you discovered?"

Detective Ma whispered.

"There..."

Ma Xiaoling pointed to a door. The door was exquisitely designed and the ancient bronze handles had a brilliant glow to it.

"Whose room does this belong to?"

Detective Ma cleared his throat and enquired.

"That room..." Uncle Chen appeared conflicted. "That is Elder Mistress's room!"

"Can we take a look?"

"I'm sorry... Our Elder Mistress doesn't like to see strangers!"

"I see!"

Detective Ma did not insist. However, he secretly made a decision.

...

It was nightfall.

"Father... I still don't think this is a good idea. That is a girl's room!"

Ma Xiaoling had a conflicted look as she gazed at the tools which Detective Ma had prepared.

"It's alright! Since you feel that the room has a problem, there must be something dirty in there!"

Detective Ma spoke loudly. "I shall do my investigations. This is for the sake of Elder Mistress too."

"Is that so?"

Ma Xiaoling seemed to have suspected something. "Are you thinking of laying your hands on the Chen Family's assets and at the same time get a stepmother for me?"

"Pui! Cough cough!"

Detective Ma almost choked on his own saliva. "What nonsense are you spouting? I... Am I such a person?"

As he spoke, he nervously touched his neck and tidied his clothes.

"If this was a simple detective mission, you wouldn't have changed your clothes intentionally..." Ma Xiaoling rolled her eyes.

"Be good. Look after the house and I will get you some lollipops!"

Detective Ma wiped his sweat off before flipping out of the window.

As a detective, he had a few detective tricks up his sleeves. He traced the path which he had walked through in the daytime and arrived at a place near the master bedroom.

At this point in time, another door creaked open. Chen Xinbo

held a candle in his hands and arrived at this elder daughter's room before whipping out a pair of keys. "Wei'er, I've come to see you!"

"It's already so late and yet he is still visiting his daughter. There must be something wrong!"

Detective Ma cursed under his breath as though he had imagined a certain scene in his mind. "This is worth my time to investigate..."

He made his way forward slowly and gingerly. However, he was unaware that a pale palm was following him behind...

...

"Eh? Who are you?"

At the same time, Ma Xiaoling examined the child before her suspiciously.

He was about the same age as her. However, he was covered in mud and fallen leaves. His clothing was tattered as though he had just returned from the wilderness.

Most importantly, his palms were purple and appeared frozen as though he was suffering from frostbite. However, he did not care a single bit as he began to pick up the dessert on the table and started munching on it.

"Are you from the village? Are you being bullied?"

Ma Xiaoling noticed the young boy's hands. "Do you want me to apply medication for you?"

"It's alright, it will heal by itself!"

Fang Yuan rubbed his tummy. "Ha... I am finally half-full. However, I still want some meat. Do you know where the kitchen is? Oh, wait, who are you? Do you belong in this house?"

"No... No! I had followed my father here. He is a superb detective and he has come here to conduct a paranormal incident!"

Ma Xiaoling was confused. Was it a good idea to reveal what her father was doing?

"Paranormal?"

Fang Yuan's eyes glistened, revealing his excitement as he began to mumble to himself. "I was only looking for the biggest house here. Could it be so coincidental? This is great... I have yet to see ghosts in the outside world. The stuff in my old mansion is too creepy."

After escaping from the Tantai Family, he had randomly chosen a direction and this was the first time he had found a settlement.

Why didn't the happenings in the Chen Residences attract the attention of the Tantai Family?

It was likely that the Tantai Family was too focused on dealing with their own curse. Why would they bother themselves with other stuff?

Furthermore, they were secretive about the location of their own mansion and would be worried of revealing their location if they came out too often to help families like the Chen Family.

"Hey, are you sure its a ghost?"

Fang Yuan glared at Ma Xiaoling.

"That's right... I've seen it for myself!"

Ma Xiaoling bit her lips.

"Your eyes..."

Fang Yuan examined her eyes and nodded his head. "I believe you! However, let me tell you a piece of bad news. If you really encounter a ghost, your father might not be able to survive!"

"You..."

Ma Xiaoling was about to cry. "What should I do? Boohoo..."

"Very simple! Hire me!"

Fang Yuan patted his chest. "I can guarantee that your father will be safe!"

A paranormal detective would be useful! To Fang Yuan, the normal case studies which a paranormal detective would take up would be good practice for him.

'Anyway, I don't have anywhere else to go. I shall let this detective help me make a fake identity and allow me to stay with them before helping them deal with some paranormal stuff... eh? Why do I feel like there are ghosts everywhere I do?'

At this point in time, Detective Ma had slowly arrived at the door. Through the seams of the door, he could hear Chen Xinbo speaking:

"Daughter... Let me see you again!"

He spoke with a soft voice and started to caress the long hair of a girl leaning against the door.

"That is..."

Detective Ma's pupils contracted and his hair stood on its ends!

Chapter 507: Assistance

"Kacha!"

A shockingly loud sound made Chen Xinbo turn around. With a stern look, he shouted. "Who's that?"

"It's me... me... Haha, Mister Chen, the moon is really bright today, haha..."

Detective Ma stood out and nervously scratched his head.

Chen Xinbo seemed to have used too much strength from the shock of discovering that someone was spying on him. The head of the girl suddenly rolled to the ground and tumbled around. It was a skeleton with hair!

"Ah! Wei'er!"

Chen Xinbo let out a cry and quickly carried the skull in his hands before wiping the dust away from it. "Did it hurt? Be good, don't cry! The pain will go away."

Looking at how Mister Chen was treating the skeleton, Detective Ma shuddered in fear.

...

"Sigh..."

It was nightfall and Uncle Chen was suffering from insomnia. He held a wine glass and sipped on wine as he reminisced about the past.

"Elder Mistress's death was a huge blow to Mister Chen... From that day onwards, he was desolate and gave up on all of his business. Furthermore, he believed that monk, that he could really recall Elder Mistress's soul with jade! Everyone in the residences were in fear and Missus Chen had pleaded her husband, but Mister Chen was still unwilling to leave..."

The Elder Mistress of the Chen Family was dead!

However, Chen Xinbo refused to accept this fact. He had even ordered the people of the residences not to speak a word about her death and everyone had to act as though Elder Mistress was still alive. This was a requirement for the 'ritual'!

He had spent almost half of his fortune buying rare and treasured jade rocks and was using them to create a spell capable of recalling a soul!

This was the truth about the Chen Residences!

"How can a dead person be revived? Master is crazy!"

Uncle Chen's face was flushed as he mumbled to himself. "Even if her soul returns, it will only be a ghost, right? Everyone in the residences is already scared to their wits. Sigh, I need to look for an opportunity to advice Master about this!"

He did not realise that a pair of pale hands had landed on his shoulders. Suddenly, the pair of hands tugged up.

"Pa!"

The wine glass fell to the floor and shattered as Uncle Chen was lifted from the ground.

"Haa...."

His face was flushed from the alcohol and as he struggled, he could not force himself out of the pair of cold hands.

"Elder Mistress... Elder Mistress's soul... let me go!"

His tears and mucus were flowing out as he spoke whatever he could think of.

However, that pair of hands held relentlessly. Finally, with a twitch, Uncle Chen had lost his breath.

"Bang!"

His corpse fell to the ground and the reflection in his eyeballs were...

...

"Detective Ma!"

Finally, Chen Xinbo had pieced the skeleton together and spoke without turning his head to look at Detective Ma.

"Ah... Mister Chen, yes!"

Detective Ma let out an embarrassing smile. It was none of his business that Mister Chen had this quirk to keep corpses.

However, if he wanted to be paid, he had to ensure that Chen Xinbo was happy.

"The real reason I hired you is for you to assist me in looking for my daughter's soul! I've seen her... However, she is unwilling to see me! If you can let me see her once more, I am willing to pay whatever price you ask for!"

Chen Xinbo's crazed look was a desperate one as well.

"Cough cough... Don't worry, Mister Chen! I will do my best to accomplish it!"

Detective Ma adjusted his tie. Suddenly, he noticed a white shadow flashed by. "Gh... Ghost!"

His legs turned jelly as he collapsed to the ground. A strong sense of fear paralysed him.

"D*mn it d*mn it d*mn it... I have yet to repay my car loan. If I delay any longer, the bank will mortgage it, this is a huge loss..."

Unknowingly, this was the only thought which surfaced in his mind.

"Creak! Creak!"

On the other side of the room, a pair of pale hands appeared on the railing. Following which, there was a head full of long black hair.

A female ghost crawled into the room on all fours and there was a

crackling sound as she made her way across the room.

"Wei'er? Is that you?"

Tears welled up in Chen Xinbo's eyes as he rushed towards the ghost. "Are you here to visit Father?"

The female ghost raised her head, revealing bloodshot eyes and a pale face.

In that instant, Detective Ma felt a sense of familiarity looking at the face. If not for the eyes and the pale face, this lady might be beautiful.

"No... You are not Wei'er!"

Chen Xinbo slipped and fell to the ground. "You are.... Ahhhhhh!"

"Bang! Bang! Bang!"

Detective Ma realised what was happening. He quickly got up to his feet and ran like mad towards the stairs. "I'm doomed! My client is dead and I won't get to earn anything!"

With quick steps, he made his way downstairs.

Initially, the lower level would be the living room which would link to the guest room.

However, this time, Detective Ma was shivering in fear. He looked towards Elder Mistress's room and noticed a big pool of blood seeping out. A pale pair of hands were firmly planted on the door, leaving a bloodied palm print.

"This is none of my business!"

He was on the verge of crying as he rushed down the stairs.

When he arrived at the first floor, all he could see was the same corridor as upstairs. The ghost in white was advancing towards him.

"No... Don't come over!"

Detective Ma shuddered as he looked towards the face of the female ghost.

"Get lost!"

At this point in time, an explosive exclamation was heard.

"Bang!"

Wood shavings flew about as a piece of the door was smashed on the female ghost. At the same time, Detective Ma seemingly heard his own daughter's voice. "Father, let's go!"

He stumbled his way and finally arrived at the living room downstairs.

Only now did he realise that his daughter, Ma Xiaoling was with another child. They were pulling Detective Ma's hands, guiding him towards the exit.

"There's a ghost! A ghost!"

Detective Ma started to scream at the top of his lungs.

"There's no use. Other than the 3 of us, there are no more living humans in this residences."

Fang Yuan scoffed as he looked at his fist. "Is it... not strong enough?"

It was impossible for any physical object to cause harm to a ghost.

If Fang Yuan restored his cultivation as a True Divine to create the purest form of martial arts willpower, only then would he stand a chance of harming the ghost.

"A ghost from the outside world is already much stronger than the Demon Spirits of the Demonic Heart Realm. This realm is haunted..."

Fang Yuan took a quick look at his stats window.

If he were to use his special ability, he would be able to seal this

ghost in him. However, he was not planning to do so.

"I am not desperate enough to rely on my special ability to survive. I will only use my Spirit Sealing Body when I am desperate... More importantly, I have to improve in my other abilities!"

Although the Tantai Family believed that it was impossible to kill spirits from the realm, Fang Yuan thought otherwise and even hoped to test it out by himself.

"What? There are no other survivors? Wait a minute, little child, who are you?"

Detective Ma started to stare at Fang Yuan suspiciously. "Are you eyeing on my daughter? Let me tell you, if you don't have a betrothal gift worth at least a million dollars, don't ever think about it..."

"Father!"

Ma Xiaoling rolled her eyes. "Is this the time to have this conversation?"

She realised that the female ghost had already come down from upstairs and were approaching them at a breakneck speed.

"Che!"

Fang Yuan scoffed and stopped in his tracks before staring at this man with a moustache. "Listen up, I am not interested in your daughter. I only saved you because your daughter has hired me for my services, and that is all! For saving you, the price you will have to pay will be to settle my identity issue and provide me with 3 meals and lodging!"

"What?"

Detective Ma scoffed in a high-pitched voice. "Dream on!"

"Oh!"

Fang Yuan shrugged his shoulders. "If that is so, then you're on

your own! I am confident that this ghost will surely catch up to you guys!"

Detective Ma looked at Fang Yuan and the approaching ghost before breaking out in cold sweat. "Alright, I'll promise you!"

"Very well, I believe you will not go back on your words. This is because you should fear me more than the ghost!"

Fang Yuan turned around and his joints started to crackle. "13 Successive Flying Eagle Strikes!"

"Whoosh! Whoosh!"

Gusts of wind started to rip even the floorboards apart. Wood shavings flew about as though a tornado was heading towards the female ghost.

"D*mn it!"

Witnessing this scene, Detective Ma rubbed his eyes in disbelief. "Where this this boy come from? With such a combat power, he must be even more powerful than the special forces, right?"

It wouldn't be as surprising if Detective Ma were to witness this in a matured adult.

More importantly, how could such combat power be found in a young kid as old as his daughter?

Detective Ma felt that his view on the world was becoming obsolete.

"Whoosh! Whoosh!"

Claw marks appeared on the pillars behind and the female ghost was nowhere to be in sight.

"Is it still not powerful enough..."

Fang Yuan composed himself as the wooden block in his hands crumbled into dust.

His stats were now comparable to a young adult. However, his

combat prowess were undoubtedly the best in this realm as he represented the most powerful of humans.

Such rare martial arts was still rendered useless against the most ordinary of ghosts! How could the humans of this realm stand any chance against the ghost infestation?

"Must I... really use the Spirit Sealing Body?"

He knew that he could strengthen this physical property of his by sealing spirits.

"However, the more spirits I seal, the more danger I expose myself to. If I cannot sustain, I will immediately experience backlash and become the most devastating... monster!"

Fang Yuan's eyes glistened. Suddenly, he rushed towards Ma Xiaoling and threw a test tube out.

"Whoosh!"

In mid-air, a pair of pale hands were drenched by the concoction from the test tube and started to smoke before retracting back.

"Thank... Thank you!"

Ma Xiaoling was stunned. If not for Fang Yuan, she would have been dead!

"It's too early to thank me. Let's talk about this after we leave the residences... Let's hope that this is a ghost which follows rules!"

Fang Yuan gazed up at the sky. It was slowly brightening as daytime arrived.

Although ghosts were scary, their behaviors were predictable. For instance, they only haunt a certain area and mostly strike at night, laying low in the daytime.

This was not because they were restricted to do so, but it was merely their habits!

If one knew the habits of a particular ghost, one would be able to

effectively deal with it!

An exorcist would be required to have good observation and judgemental skills. Of course, there were many who were overconfident with these qualities and were still killed by ghosts!

Chapter 508: Settling Down

"Come! Everyone, take a sip!

Fang Yuan took out a bottle of concoction and passed it to Ma Xiaoling and Detective Ma.

"This is the same concoction which I used previously. After drinking it, you will be able to remain hidden before the ghost. If you use it directly, it will be able to keep the ghosts and bay for a short while..."

"Blergh! This is smelly!"

After hearing about its properties, Detective Ma quickly took the bottle from Fang Yuan and gulped it down with a frown.

Seeing this, Ma Xiaoling prepared herself. She pinched her nose and licked a little before twitching. "This is disgusting... it tastes awful!"

"Be glad that you can drink this! Head to the door!"

Fang Yuan frowned. He was already prepared for his escape and therefore stole some seeds from the Ghost Garden. Even he was not confident of germinating the plants outside the Ghost Garden and therefore, his supply of the concoction was limited.

'Now that the both of them are hidden, I am the only living person in this place.'

Fang Yuan slowed himself down and soaked his hands with the concoction. He remained alert of his surroundings.

However, after that sneak attack, the female ghost seemed to have disappeared into thin air.

"Phew... We are finally here. Will we be safe outside?"

Detective Ma and Ma Xiaoling ran across the garden and arrived at the gate of the Chen Residences.

"Something's not right. Wait up!"

A hue of gold flashed across Fang Yuan's eyes. Suddenly, he rushed forward and pulled the both of them back.

"Kacha!"

Before them, the originally opened metal gate began to transform into the female ghost's... mouth!

The female ghost became extremely big in size as she opened her mouth and waited at the entrance.

Ma Xiaoling screamed.

If they had continued running, they would have ran into the female ghost's stomach.

"Get lost!"

Fang Yuan rushed forward and struck his fist out.

With the concoction-soaked fist, he finally managed to hit the body of the female ghost.

It was chilly!

A chill sensation started to spread from Fang Yuan's fists. The sensation slowly turned to a burning hot one.

The feeling of hitting a ghost was like hitting a metal person. Fang Yuan did not manage to harm her.

"Get... lost!"

Fang Yuan exclaimed. Using more force on both of his hands, he managed to push the female ghost away, revealing an opening.

"This is the time... run!"

Ma Xiaoling held her father and slipped through the opening. Finally, they ran out of the real gate and arrived outside.

At the same time, the sun started to rise in the East, spilling its golden rays across the land.

As they looked back, the Chen Residences remained sturdy. If not for the mess around, everything which happened last night only felt like a terrible nightmare.

"Phew! We're finally out."

Detective Ma stroked his moustache. Suddenly, he started to wail. "It's gone! Gone! My career... My task... all gone!"

"Father... shouldn't you be worried about the brother who saved us out?"

Ma Xiaoling spoke with contempt.

"I'll let him die for all I care..."

Detective Ma started to tear. "No, he should die!"

"That's right, then you won't have to pay me anymore, right?"

Fang Yuan stood at the side and snickered.

"Ah!"

Detective Ma leapt backwards and held his waist. "Are you human or ghost?"

"Of course I'm human! However, if you are not going to pay up, you will have to face the consequences of ghosts!"

Fang Yuan chuckled.

"Oh no, paying up is a small issue. Now that everyone in the Chen Residences is dead, every single one of us is going to be a suspect! We will be caught!"

Detective Ma knelt on the ground and held his head with both his hands.

"You're wrong. Only you will be caught!"

Fang Yuan made a cute expression. "Who will believe that two kids can kill so many people?"

With this blow, Detective Ma froze on the spot.

"Alright, brother, what else do you need Father to help you out with? Save him once more!"

Ma Xiaoling could not take it any further as she tugged at Fang Yuan's sleeves, pleading him to help once more.

"This is true... after all, you are still useful."

Fang Yuan rubbed his chin. "Don't be a crybaby just yet. As a detective, you must have your relationships in the police station, right? I can give you something so that they will visit the ghost themselves. Naturally, they will know that you are speaking the truth and at the same time, you will be able to publicize your reputation."

"Thank you, brother!"

Detective Ma quickly thanked Fang Yuan like a fish out of water. He held onto Fang Yuan's hands tightly.

"Your desperate look makes me think... Xiaoling, what is your father's name?"

"Ah, when my father was born, he had his fortune told by a blind person. The blind fortune teller said that he will become a talented person in the future and therefore called him..."

"Ma Wencai!?"

Fang Yuan sounded in disbelief.

"No, it's Ma Wencai!"

...

After a week, in the office of Detective Ma.

Fang Yuan wore a checkered shirt and suspenders. Like a grown-up, he was eating breakfast as he browsed through the newspapers.

'The Ghost Killer in the Haunted Chen Residences!'

'The Government Heavily Rewards Professionals!'

'The Exclusive Interview of Ma Wencai, the Great Detective -

How I Fought the Evil Ghost with Wits and Courage!

On the printed text, there was also the photograph on Ma Wencai smiling like a fool.

"Xiaoling, your father is really ugly!"

Fang Yuan commented as he set the newspaper aside and began to eat his eggs and toast.

"My apologies. Credit goes to you!"

Ma Xiaoling seemed humble.

Fang Yuan paid no attention to her.

All he needed now was time to mature and grow without much attention.

"Wow... Ma Wencai the Great Detective is here!"

The door opened and a delightful Ma Wencai in a suit walked into the restaurant before displaying a pose. "How's this? Am I handsome?"

The two kids were speechless.

"Alright!"

Ma Wencai realised that no one was paying any attention to him. Lazily, he took out a document and placed it before Fang Yuan. "Brother, your identity is settled. You are an orphan adopted by me. Your name will be Fang Yuan!"

"Hmm, that's great!"

Fang Yuan scanned the document and nodded his head in satisfaction.

He would be a fool if he continued to use his identity as Tantai Mieming. Furthermore, he was not used to that name and it was better for him to re-use his original name.

"From today onwards, I will be part of the detective corporation!"

Fang Yuan smiled. "The both of you will handle the normal cases. If both of you are unable to deal with it, then leave it to me!"

"This is great!"

Ma Wencai nodded his head and rewarded Fang Yuan with a piece of bacon. "...About that, the Chen Residences is already sealed up as a restricted area and the prices of property in the vicinity have also fallen. They are now recruiting people to deal with the powerful ghost. Brother, are you interested in this?"

"Not at the moment!"

Fang Yuan lazily picked up the piece of bacon graciously which made Ma Wencai suspect if he was merely a young master who had left his own family.

"Take my advice. If you don't want to die, don't ever return to the Chen Residences! You were lucky the previous time to have encountered a restricted ghost who will only kill in the residences. However, it can still come out but it merely chooses not to. If you anger it, hehe..."

"I understand."

Ma Wencai shuddered in fear before stroking his moustache in confusion. "That female ghost seems to resemble the missing servant - Xia He. The newspapers have dug up the entire ancestry of the Chen Family. Although Chen Xinbo was a good father, his other hobbies were not that respectable. Even the housekeeper, Uncle Chen, was an accomplice! Could it be that Xia He has had enough of it and attempted suicide to become a ghost so as to take revenge? This does not make sense, the timeline is not right!"

"It will not be a ghost if you are able to understand it!"

After finishing his breakfast, Fang Yuan wiped his mouth with a piece of serviette. "That ghost might be Xia He or it might not be. The real Xia He might have been dead all along and a random ghost might have come along to impersonate her... It is even more

unclear as to how the ghost had appeared and there is no reasonable explanation for it. According to my predictions, the most possible scenario is that Chen Xinbo had started a ritual to recall his daughter's soul, which became the source of all trouble. The ritual, together with the suicidal servant, might have created the powerful ghost!"

"If that is so..."

Ma Xiaoling shook with fear. "Mister Chen is rather pitiful... He might have been killed by his own daughter's soul..."

"How can a dead person be revived?"

Fang Yuan scoffed. "On the other hand, I am interested in that monk. We can investigate in this direction in the future."

The corporation was rather huge. Other than the offices, guest lounge and information room, the living quarters of the Ma Family was behind the office. There was also a small gym.

"This is not bad!"

Fang Yuan examined the exercise equipment in the gym and the sandbag hung before him before nodding his head in satisfaction. "The current plan will be to raise my physical stats to the limit of this realm before I reach 20. Also, through the corporation, I will encounter all kinds of spirits and undergo my research."

Fang Yuan had left the ghost in the Chen Residences in order to use it to train himself as well as act as a bait.

It was rare for such a thing to occur, and even more so that the ghost was binded to the location. Therefore, Fang Yuan would not seal it up and instead, he would make full use of it by studying it.

Furthermore, he could use it to test his own progress in martial arts as well as test the effectiveness of martial arts or spiritual spells in dealing with these ghosts.

Finally, the bounty placed on the ghost by the government was

also a bait. He might be able to bait other exorcists to the residences.

"Alright, let's begin!"

Fang Yuan's arms started to move slowly as he practised Jujitsu.

To a 5-year-old kid, he could not attempt the most strenuous exercises.

He still had to test out the possibility of using spiritual spells in this realm as well.

Every day, he also had to experiment in growing the seeds which he had smuggled out from the Ghost Garden.

Life ahead for Fang Yuan would be exciting.

"It's this type of realm again!"

After training, Fang Yuan arrived at the window. Looking at the tall buildings, a reminiscent smile appeared on his face.

Chapter 509: The Photograph

"We will all surely die!"

In Silver Eagle University, in the private room of a cafe, a few people who seemed like students gathered together. They were all looking pale and panicky. "All of us have seen it. Lu Xia is dead. We cannot run! Everyone in the photograph will die!"

One of the girls could no longer hold it in and started to cry.

"Bai Ling, don't cry. There must be a solution!"

Beside the girl, a tall and handsome-looking boy comforted her as though he was her boyfriend.

"I don't care... I want to transfer out of this school and leave this place!"

Another girl started to wail.

"Rather than leaving, why don't we look for a monk or a daoist? They might be able to help us. Right, Brother Yang?"

The last guy wore spectacles. He was shorter and appeared decent. Under such circumstances, he was still able to keep his cool.

"Wu Lu, don't worry. Xiu Wen is right. There must be a solution to this!"

Yang Guang spoke with confidence as though he was trying to encourage himself. "We will surely be able to escape from that d*mned curse, for sure! Speaking of this, I have gathered information and realised that there are many respectable people in this field that we can pay a visit to. Perhaps... we can let them examine the photograph!"

As he spoke the word 'photograph', he became subconsciously softer as though he was in fear of something.

"Photograph?"

The two girls shuddered in fear and Xiu Wen raised his glasses before retrieving a monochrome photograph from his pocket.

On the photograph, there were 5 people and the background was an abandoned apartment.

However, where Lu Xia once stood, it was now white and empty as though the film of the photograph was overexposed. The remaining 4 of them had weird expressions and Bai Ling's face was beginning to blur up.

"Will the next one be Bai Ling?"

Xiu Wen mumbled to himself.

He could not throw this photograph away, and it was indestructible, even after being soaked in water or being burnt by fire.

Previously, before Lu Xia's death, there were the same signs on the photograph.

"No!"

Bai Ling screamed. "I don't want to die!"

"Relax, we'll protect you!"

Yang Guang hugged Bai Ling tightly. Witnessing this scene, Wu Lu's eyes began to tear up and Xiu Wen passed her a piece of napkin. "Lulu... Don't worry, I will protect you."

Wu Lu nodded her head and felt a tinge of sorrow in her heart.

She had always held a torch for Lu Xia. Although she knew that Xiu Wen liked her, she never reciprocated. Never would she have known that this weak-looking boy would feel so reliable now!

"We seem to have made a big mistake that time!"

Yang Guang suddenly spoke. "All of us were scared to our wits! How could we have forgotten to take the camera? There might be clues on it!"

"Are you crazy?"

Bai Ling turned pale with fear. "Didn't Lu Xia say that that was merely a second-hand camera? If we return to the apartment now, the 'ghost' might be waiting for us!"

"Of course I am not intending to go there alone! I am thinking of asking others to go, for instance, private investigators!"

Yang Guang held a piece of newspaper article in his hand. "The Great Detective Ma Wencai is a famous paranormal investigator. He has solved countless paranormal cases and will surely be able to help us. Although his fees are high, I am already prepared to use all my pocket money and my earnings from my part-time job to pay for it."

"Count me in!"

Wu Lu clenched her teeth. "If we can settle that ghost once and for all, it would be avenging Lu Xia."

In the newspaper article, Ma Wencai seemed to have grown plump. However, his face was still full of energy and the newspaper heading wrote: "Detective Ma breaks an impossible case once again..."

Bai Ling wiped her tears and seemed to have recalled what had happened on that day.

...

The afternoon sun of the hot summer made everyone groggy.

It was a rare break during the weekends and Yang Guang had asked Bai Ling out for an afternoon tea.

At this point in time, Lu Xia called Yang Guang over the phone. "Yang Guang? Do you want to explore? I've just bought a cheap camera and we can try to take some photographs!"

Yang Guang was interested in photography since young and often saved up to buy expensive photography equipment.

Unsurprisingly, he was interested in Lu Xia's new buy.

"Alright!"

If Bai Ling could turn back time, she swore that she would have used every means to stop Yang Guang! Unfortunately, there was no such thing as 'ifs'.

Their meeting spot was an abandoned apartment in the outskirts of the city.

At the door of the apartment, Lu Xia, Wu Lu and Xiu Wen were already waiting there. As soon as they saw Yang Guang and Bai Ling arriving, they waved their hands in excitement.

"Why would you ever think of coming here to take photos?"

Yang Guang examined the apartment behind. It seemed to be built in the 90s. It was old and beyond repair, which gave it the creeps.

"Don't you know?"

Lu Xia appeared shocked. "This is a famous haunted house! The person who sold me the camera told me that this camera has a special function which allows it to capture paranormal presence. I want to try it out for myself too! Let's see if we can take any photo of ghosts or the likes."

Lu Xia was different from Yang Guang, who was an avid photographer. On the other hand, Lu Xia was fond of paranormal activities and his room was entirely decorated with paranormal sightings.

Yang Guang rolled his eyes. "But... those are rumours, right? I have never read any article about people dying in this apartment..."

In this realm, the richer one was, the more superstitious one would be. For the normal people, if they did not encounter any paranormal sightings, they would not pay attention to any news

reports regarding these sightings.

Of course, Yang Guang was still right.

If it was something like the Chen Residences, there would already be police patrolling outside the perimeters to stop anyone who was trying to peek into the residences. They would also send scientists to conduct investigations within the residences.

Therefore, the claim that the apartment was haunted was most likely a baseless one.

"Alright, since I'm a bro, I shall accompany you this time. However, let me take a look at the camera..."

Yang Guang pointed at the black camera hung around Lu Xia's neck.

"No problem!"

Lu Xia passed the camera to Yang Guang and in no time, Yang Guang became completely obsessed with it.

This was an old school 'polaroid' and they could print the photograph immediately after taking it. There was a small flash mounted on the top of the camera as well.

"It's not bad! It's a really good deal!"

Yang Guang even felt a little jealous of Lu Xia when Lu Xia revealed the price of the camera.

"Haha, It's my natural luck!"

Lu Xia scratched his head. He was the most well-to-do among his friends. Even so, he had to think twice before making the purchase for the camera. However, after seeing the looks of admiration on his friends' faces, he felt that the purchase was totally worth it.

The group of them entered the apartment and it was exactly how they imagined it to be. Other than a few dark spots, there was trash everywhere and there was nothing special.

"Sigh... This is boring! So much for my imagination."

Lu Xia sighed as he gave a look of boredom.

"Regardless, in order to commemorate today, let's take a photo!"

Xiu Wen suggested a location. "How about there?"

"Hmm, alright!"

Yang Guang positioned the camera properly and set a timer. "3, 2, 1... Cheese!"

He quickly ran back to his friends to complete the group photograph.

The picture was printed out in no time and Yang Guang took it from the camera. "Eh?"

"What happened?"

Lu Xia started to pay more attention as he held the photograph in his hand. "It is a little overexposed. Why did my face become like this? Is this the camera's problem?"

In the black and white photograph, there were only 4 faces among the 5 of them. Lu Xia's face was blurred and even seemed a little ferocious, like an... evil ghost!

"Ahhhh!"

Yang Guang screamed as he threw the photograph onto the ground.

"What happened? Brother Yang"

Xiu Wen asked.

"Lu Xia's face smiled at me!"

Yang Guang started to shudder in fear. The dark spots in the apartment started to instil even more fear in him. "This place gives me the chills. Let's leave!"

"How can we leave? We need to at least take another picture!"

Lu Xia complained as he went to retrieve the camera which was positioned atop an old wooden box.

"Pa!"

At this point in time, a black hand appeared and slapped on the camera.

"This is..."

Yang Guang shivered and almost forgot to breathe. He saw... a charred silhouette climbing from the shadows, placing its hand on the camera!

"It's a ghost!"

The two girls shrieked, breaking the silence. Yang Guang and Lu Xia held them both and quickly left the apartment.

"Phew..."

Under the sunlight outside, the 5 of them were catching their breaths. "It's great that we are able to make it out!"

"Phew..."

Lu Xia took a deep breath and broke out into a cold sweat. "There... There's a real ghost! What the hell!"

Although he used to be obsessed with paranormal sightings, after seeing a real ghost, his heart was now filled with fear.

"Ahhh!"

Xiu Wen let out a piercing scream as he gazed at Lu Xia with a pale look. "Didn't you throw that photograph away?"

"I did!"

Lu Xia nodded his head. However, Xiu Wen slowly took a photograph out from his pocket, which utterly shocked Lu Xia.

"It... I didn't pick it up..."

Xiu Wen was on the verge of breaking down.

"Jerk!"

Yang Guang took a step forward, snatched the photograph and burnt the photograph to ashes with a lighter. "So what if its a ghost? The sun is shining brightly now..."

"Ahhhh!"

This time, it was Lu Xia who screamed. With a shivering hand, from his pocket, he took out another... black and white photograph! It was the group photo with the 5 of them!

However, this time, his facial features were even more blurred and he shuddered at the sight of it.

From that day onwards, the photograph became the ultimate nightmare for the 5 of them.

No matter how they tried to get rid of it by burning or tearing it, the photograph would miraculously appear in the hands of the 5 of them. With every new photograph, Lu Xia's body would slowly disappear and finally, all that was left was a white spot where he once stood.

On the day where Lu Xia had completely disappeared from the photograph, Yang Guang and the others had received news.

Lu Xia was dead!

He was burnt alive and it was due to the malfunctioning of an electrical appliance!

Their nightmares had arrived!

Chapter 510: The Next Death

The curriculum in university was not that stressful; with all that had happened to them, the few of them decided to skip classes and paid a visit to the respectable people which Xiu Wen had recommended.

"Andong Road... It is a very secluded street!"

When the bus finally came, Bai Ling examined her surroundings. "We are about to reach the outskirts of the city. Xiu Wen, is the master you are recommending able to help us?"

"Master Liu is a respectable man! At their status level, they will naturally stay away from the city, understand? It is already fortunate for us that he is not living in some cave in the mountains!"

As Xiu Wen spoke, his voice became softer and softer as though he had lost his breath.

"Regardless, let's pay him a visit! He might have his own style of doing things!"

Yang Guang was the basketball captain in university and was the leader among the few of them. Looking at the short buildings and smelly canals, he frowned.

The 4 of them walked through a few alleys and even got lost for a few times before finally arriving at their destination.

"Block 57, Andong Road, Unit no. 26. This is the place."

Xiu Wen examined the apartment before him. Would a real master really stay in this dilapidated place?

Mustering his courage, he looked for Unit no. 26 and knocked on the door. "Hello... Is Master Liu in?"

"Who's that?"

The door opened and an awful stench whiffed out of the unit.

The two ladies quickly used their handkerchiefs to pinch their noses.

The unit was in a mess and there were a few altars lying around in a mess.

Of course, what had captured their attention was Liu Yuan.

The first time Yang Guan laid eyes on him, he thought he was looking at a wall of meat!

Liu Yuan was only wearing a pair of shorts. The fats on his body were folded in many layers as though he was a big fat pig!

"Are you Liu Yuan, Daoist Liu?"

Xiu Wen forced a smile.

"Oh, I recall. You have contacted me before. Are you looking to exorcise a ghost?"

The confused look on Liu Yuan's face disappeared and he became much more energetic. "Please come in!"

The few of them tiptoed into the apartment and opened a few windows before they could breathe normally.

"Haha... My place is in a mess. Please, make yourselves at home!"

Liu Yuan moved away a pile of dirty clothes from the sofa and invited them to sit.

"No, it's alright! We'll just stand!"

Wu Lu noticed the suspicious stains on the sofa and rejected the offer. Who would dare to sit on that sofa? Of course they would pass.

"Alright! I wonder what kind of ritual the few of you are interested in? The Middle Eastern one? Or the Western one? The daoist one? Or the Buddhist one? Or a mixed ritual?"

Liu Yuan rubbed his fists together and he resembled a butcher advertising his meat.

"Aren't you a daoist?"

Yang Guang looked around in confusion and realised that the several altars lying around were extremely mixed. There were daoist gods, Buddhist gods and even gods from the West.

"Sigh... This is for survival! I am well-versed in both Chinese and Western exorcism. Whatever type of service you are looking for, I will surely be able to satisfy you!"

Liu Yuan slapped his chest with confidence as he gave his assurance, but his pair of eyes always wandered to the two girls.

"Alright, if you are able to solve our problem, we will be willing to pay any price you ask for!"

Yang Guang slotted himself in front of Bai Ling and explained what had happened before taking out the photograph. "What do you think, Master?"

Although it was obvious that Liu Yuan was a conman, they were already too desperate. They were like drowning people. If they were to come across a strand of grass, they would still hold on to it tightly.

"Hmm... This is troublesome!"

Liu Yuan took the photograph over and examined it with a serious look.

"Do you think we have any hope?"

"The few of you... are being pestered by a ghost who was killed in a fire. In order to be saved, a Great Ritual Offering to the All-Embracing Heaven needs to be done!"

Liu Yuan shook his head. "We do not have enough materials here. I can only execute my version of it, known as the Small Ritual Offering to the All-Embracing Heaven. However, it will be enough to ensure your peace and survival for the entire year."

"Is that so? Quickly begin the ritual!"

Xiu Wen was getting impatient.

"No problem at all!"

Although Liu Yuan's room was dirty, it was still well-organised. Not long after, he was changed into a daoist costume and was wielding a wooden sword. The ritual began as he splattered water on the 4 of them:

"Disaster will be averted, the evil ghosts shall retreat as I order!"

"Rumble!"

As Liu Yuan executed his ritual, the flames on the candles in front started to grow bigger. Yang Guang and company started to feel hopeful.

"Master, how is it?"

"Don't worry!"

After the first round of ritual, Liu Yuan was heavily exhausted and was sweating profusely. "I have already engraved a daoist exorcism talisman on all of you! That evil ghost will no longer dare to approach you. Next up, as soon as you burn this photograph, you will be able to ensure peace for the following year!"

Liu Yuan gazed at the bronze basin before him and spoke in a serious tone.

"That's good!"

Yang Guang held the photograph and threw it in the fire basin forcefully.

"Whooo!"

The tongues of flame started to burn the photograph.

"It is finally over..."

Bai Ling and Wu Lu were on the verge of crying, while Liu Yuan was wiping away his sweat as he smiled at them. "Now, shall we discuss about the price?"

"Wait a minute!"

Xiu Wen screamed. "Look!"

Liu Yuan froze. Looking at the fire basin, the ashes slowly regrouped to form a new... photograph!

"You're a liar! Do you call this resolved?"

Yang Guang was enraged as he held his fists up high.

"Ghost... ghost!"

Liu Yuan was weaker than he thought. As soon as he witnessed this creepy scene, he froze on the floor and started to pee in his pants.

"Let's go!"

Bai Ling turned around. "He's a cheat!"

"Bang!"

"Bang! Bang!"

The door and windows slammed shut and the entire unit became dimmer.

"Whooooo!"

Under the glow of the candlelight, Bai Ling's body on the photograph started to blur up.

"Ah!"

The two girls screamed.

"Let's go!"

Yang Guang arrived at the door and realised that the doorknob was not working. Immediately, he started to kick at the door.

"No... save me!"

Behind him, Liu Yuan's cries were heard.

"Quick! Come on!"

Bai Ling's face was covered in tears and she was about to break down.

According to the signs on the photograph, she was the next victim the ghost would kill!

"Sha! Sha!"

"Sha! Sha!"

Behind, Liu Yuan's cries became softer and softer. A suspicious shuffling noise was heard as though something was crawling on the ground.

Wu Lu turned around. All she saw was a charred head reaching out from the darkness behind.

"Bang!"

Finally, after the two guys worked together, the door was kicked open, revealing a corridor.

"Let's go!"

Yang Guang held Bai Ling's hand and ran out of the unit before arriving at the stairs.

"Yang Guang! Save me! I don't want to die!"

Bai Ling started to sob.

"Don't worry, I will surely save you!"

The two of them held each other's hands and ran down, ignoring the cries for help behind them.

"Dong! Dong!"

"Dong! Dong!"

When they had arrived downstairs, they realised that it was no longer the entrance which they had come from, but an underground basement.

"What's happening?"

Bei Ling tightened her grip on Yang Guang's hand. "This was the path we took to come up!"

Looking at the dim surroundings around, she became increasingly frightened as she held on to Yang Guang's hand tightly and ran frantically.

...

"What happened?"

Xiu Wen, Wu Lu and Yang Guang ran out of the apartment and looked around.

"Where's Ling Ling? Where's Ling Ling?"

Yang Guang was starting to panic. When they first kicked the door down, Bai Ling became crazy as she ran out first with the rest following behind. However, they had lost her at the stairs.

"She was in front all along and should have come out first!"

Xiu Wen tried to comfort Wu Lu.

"Bai Ling! Bai Ling!"

Yang Guang shouted at the top of his lungs as his voice was filled with desolation.

...

"Wait a minute!"

Bai Ling could hear Yang Guang's voice from afar and felt confused. "Guang.... Guang is outside? Then who am I holding on to right now?"

After the brief period of confusion, she could feel a rough and burning sensation coming from her palm.

"You... you..."

Her body started to shiver as she tried to let go of the hand.

However, the other hand started to exert more strength and held

on to her wrist tightly like a pair of handcuffs.

"No... Don't..."

Under extreme fear, Bai Ling turned around and all she could see was a charred corpse following closely behind her, holding her wrist tightly.

"Ahhh!!!"

...

"It's Ling Ling screaming!"

Outside, Yang Guang became mad. He ran up the stairs but soon after collapsed to the ground, paralyzed.

"Ah!"

Wu Lu and Xiu Wen followed closely behind. As they rounded the same corner, Wu Lu started to shriek and supported herself against the wall before gagging.

At that corner, a charred corpse quietly sat there and hugged its own legs.

From the appearance and the clothing of the corpse, it was Bai Ling!

"Let's go!"

Xiu Wen pulled Yang Guang along. "We cannot let others see this..."

They had already created a lot of commotion. If anyone were to come by to see this, they would surely call the cops!

If they were to be arrested and brought to the police station, even if they were not suspected of murder, they would still die anyway!

None of them felt that the police would be able to do anything against the ghost. If they were to be retained in the police station and were to encounter the ghost there, they would not be able to run away.

"Yang Guang, if you do not leave, how will you be able to avenge Bai Ling?"

Xiu Wen shouted in Yang Guang's ears.

"That's right! Avenge her!"

Flames of willpower erupted in Yang Guang's eyes. "I will avenge both Bai Ling and Lu Xia!"

He gritted his teeth as he stood up. "Let's leave this place now!"

"What do you intend to do?"

Wu Lu gazed at Yang Guang with a worried look.

"Will the next death be Wu Lu?"

Yang Guang felt his pocket and took out a photograph. Bai Ling's body was entirely white. Among the 3 of them remaining, Wu Lu's face started to blur up.

"The both of you, look for that detective!"

Yang Guang gritted his teeth. "I will return to the apartment to look for the camera and destroy it! It is the cause of all these!"

Chapter 511: Seeking Help

"Yang Guang..."

Wu Lu wanted to advise Yang Guang but all of a sudden, she saw something.

From upstairs, a pair of charred hands started to climb down towards them.

"Quickly go!"

Yang Guang shook Wu Lu off and pushed her away. "We'll split up!"

Even the sunlight outside could not provide them with any sense of security against the ghost.

"Let's go!"

Wu Lu was tearing up as she fled with Xiu Wen.

"How? How?"

Wu Lu wanted to jog slowly at first.

Slowly, the jog became a sprint and with a slip, she fell to the ground and her tears were flowing out. "I will die soon! I don't want to end up like Bai Ling!"

"Don't worry Wu Lu, I will protect you!"

Xiu Wen pulled her from the ground. "Let's move quickly!"

"Thank you! Thank you, Xiu Wen!"

In that instant, Lu Xia's impression in Wu Lu's mind started to fade away and was slowly being replaced by Xiu Wen's smiling face.

"Driver! Stop the car!"

The two of them ran to the main road. Wu Lu's heart was about to jump out of her chest as she quickly hailed a cab.

"Where are the two of you going?"

"We're going to... The Ma Paranormal Detective Corporation, where Ma Wencai is!"

Wu Lu was at lost and could only recall what Yang Guang had once mentioned.

"That detective... Yang Guang was already preparing to hire him for his services. We shall look for him and ask him to bring Yang Guang and the camera back from the apartment."

"The Ma Paranormal Detective Corporation? Alright!"

The driver stepped on the pedal and as the cab drove away, Wu Lu heaved a sigh of relief.

...

Within the Ma Detective Corporation, Fang Yuan had specially requested for a greenhouse so that he could attempt growing the plants he had brought out from the Ghost Garden.

He was now watering a green sunflower.

Being 20 years old, Fang Yuan had a graceful demeanour and the act of him watering the plants would give one a sense of serenity.

"Although its properties are weakened, at least I am able to grow them in the outside world now..."

Fang Yuan nodded in satisfaction as he gazed at a tomato with a human face engraved on it. Even though he was skilled in botany, the difficulty of growing plants out of their natural habitat was still great for Fang Yuan.

"The good thing is that I've finally succeeded... I have retained their properties and even altered their appearances so that they become more adapted to the outside world.

At least normal people wouldn't get a shock when they see them!"

These plants had weird shapes at most, but they were not too

shocking.

Even Ma Xiaoling and Ma Wencai would occasionally come in to take a look at the plants.

"Unfortunately, there is a restriction on supernatural powers in this realm.

Even for me, after becoming 10 times more powerful than the average human, I am unable to progress any further!"

Fang Yuan sighed.

The restriction on his stats was one of his biggest discoveries of this realm.

"The abnormal Purple Eye Realm, the restrictions on the stats window and the presence of ghosts are all related to each other...

This realm is completely infiltrated by a high dimension energy from the Demonic Heart Realm!

It is at least as high of a dimension as the being which robbed the dream dao from Da Qian!"

Only such a being had the ability to temporarily restrict lower-levelled beings of their stats and abilities.

"Furthermore... This form of energy is of a higher quality as compared to dream elemental force! Because of this, the ghosts here seems to be indestructible! They are harder to deal with as compared to Demon Spirits!"

"The mutated source of which this energy comes from might be related to the hallucination I experienced when entering the realm!"

Fang Yuan took a quick glance at his own stats:

"Name: Fang Yuan (Tantai Mieming)

Essence: 10.0 (100)

Spirit: 10.0 (100)

Magic: 10.0 (100)

Profession: Exorcist

Technique: Exorcism (Peak), Pharmacy (Peak), Eagle Claw Grappling Technique (Peak)

Skill: [Medicine (Level 3)], [Botany (Level 6)], [Fiery Golden Eyes (Level 1)], [Spirit Sealing Body (1st Grade)]"

'Spirit Sealing Body (1st Grade): Your body is a weapon which is able to seal evil ghosts. You will be able to seal any ghost that you come into contact with into your body! You have activated the 1st Grade, and the capacity for sealing evil ghosts: 1! You can choose to release the ghost!'

"15 years of living in seclusion and this is all I've got."

Exorcism and Pharmacy were secret techniques of the Tantai Family.

Having the peak level of these techniques meant that even the elders in the Tantai family who specialised in these areas might not be better than Fang Yuan at it.

As for the Eagle Claw Grappling Technique, Fang Yuan had developed it based on his own martial arts experience, combining it with the grappling techniques of this realm to create a whole new technique.

With his physical abilities 10 times stronger than the average human, he could well be regarded as the superman of this realm!

"Unfortunately, with my abilities, I am still only able to exorcise the low-levelled ghosts. It seems like it is time for me to improve my Spirit Sealing Body, huh?"

Fang Yuan placed the watering can down and seemed a little vexed.

To speak the truth, even though Ma Wencai's reputation had gone up and even though there were many more cases now,

paranormal cases were still the minority.

Ma Xiaoling grew up with the natural gift of the Yin Yang Eye.

With Fang Yuan's guidance, she became an elite exorcist and most of the time, she could accomplish the task on her own without Fang Yuan's help.

The few times which she needed Fang Yuan's help were the few times which benefited Fang Yuan a lot.

These were the times Fang Yuan could conduct his research, confirm his predictions and collect data.

"Ghosts which appear in the form of spirits are the low-levelled ghosts and I can exorcise them directly.

Of course, this would not mean that they are killed off immediately. Because of the fact that ghosts are indestructible, in another 10 years up to a hundred years, they will be recreated.

Even so, I will still need to do my best to exorcise them with the help of the exorcism technique and the concoctions from the Tantai Family."

According to Fang Yuan's own observations, he had classified ghosts into 4 levels, namely Spirit, Murderous, Strange and [Wuyin](#)!

The Spirit Level represented the lowest-levelled ghosts. They would appear and kill humans in the spirit form.

However, they were not able to split themselves into more than a single entity and were bounded by many other restrictions.

The Murderous Level would be a level higher.

Ghosts in this level would be able to turn invisible or split themselves up.

They would be able to alter a human's memories as well and if a normal human were to encounter a ghost at the Murderous Level, they would only be played to death!

The Strange Level would represent an even more terrorising presence.

Ghosts at this level would be able to kill a human in many different ways. If such a ghost were to hear a person's name, the person would be cursed and doomed.

The ghost would warp time and space in an attempt to alter reality or even kill the person in their dreams! It would be able to kill the person while tricking the person into thinking that he or she was still alive!

However, ghosts from both the Murderous Level or Strange Level would come from a source.

Even if the source might reside in another space or dimension, as long the source existed, there would be hope in dealing with these ghosts!

The final level would be the Wuyin Level.

Ghosts at this level would leave the entire realm in despair! There was no way in dealing with these ghosts! No way to get rid of them!

Furthermore, they do not come from any source!

This would mean that there was no solution to wipe out these ghosts! These ghosts would be the curse of an entire realm!

In Fang Yuan's memories, only the cursed bronze door of the Tantai Family might be able to match up to the level of such a ghost!

"A normal human would already stand little chance against a normal Spirit Level ghost and exorcists would already have to be careful.

In encountering a Murderous Level ghost, even the Tantai Family will have to take it seriously.

For a ghost of the Strange Level, anyone will have to avoid them

at all costs..."

As for the Wuyin Level, even Fang Yuan could not be certain if ghosts of such level existed. This was only his prediction.

However, if a ghost of such a level would appear, it would mean the destruction of an entire realm!

"According to the Tantai Family, 1 in 5 blood-related descendants of the Tantai Family will have an awakened ability to become a normal exorcist.

His ability will allow him to deal with a Spirit Level ghost.

Against a Murderous Level curse, a few elite exorcists will have to combine forces and even so, the outcome of the exorcism will still be uncertain.

Only the most powerful of exorcists will stand a chance against the paranormal beings of the Strange Level! Unfortunately, most of them will end up dying against such a powerful paranormal presence!"

Fang Yuan knew that his abilities were already much more powerful than any exorcist of the Tantai Family.

However, he still felt that he was too weak to resolve the problem of the bronze door.

"Indeed... The only way is to increase my cultivation of my Spirit Sealing Body!"

He sighed once more as he realised that this was the plan the realm had for him. He was the realm's final hope!

"Eh?"

Suddenly, Fang Yuan looked towards the office. "Finally, a troubling case!"

...

In the office, Ma Xiaoling was tending to Wu Lu and Xiu Wen.

"Please have a cup of coffee!"

A tall and sweet-looking girl in a pink apron carried two cups of coffee into the office before knocking on the table. "Father... We have clients!"

"Mmm..."

Behind the table, Ma Wencai raised his head from the newspapers and wiped the saliva off his lips before yawning.

"It's two students? Didn't I tell you that I, the Great Detective Ma Wencai, will not attend to these normal cases?!"

"Father!"

Ma Xiaoling playfully chopped Ma Wencai's head with her hand before turning around to smile. "Please don't mind him. I'm Detective Ma's assistant and you can call me Xiaoling. Now... Let us begin!"

She took her apron off, revealing a white suit inside. Unfazed, Ma Xiaoling took her notebook out.

"Are you guys... up to it?"

Wu Lu started to sweat profusely. Why did Ma Wencai resemble Li Yuan so much? Both of them didn't seem too reliable.

"Don't worry, we are professional. Please ignore my father! In the corporation, he is the weakest among us."

Ma Xiaoling smiled.

"Ring!"

At this point in time, Fang Yuan opened the door. "Why didn't you call me?"

"These two clients claimed to have been pestered by a ghost!"

Ma Xiaoling appeared serious as Ma Wencai felt a chill going down his spine.

Ma Wencai knew Fang Yuan's abilities.

The fact that Ma Xiaoling required Fang Yuan's help this time meant that this case was an important one.

"This time might be a real ghost and a curse! I was about to look for you!"

Ma Xiaoling passed the photograph to Fang Yuan.

"Mmm..."

Fang Yuan scanned through the photograph quickly before tossing it on the table and stretching his leg out.

"You..."

Initially, Wu Lu was full of anticipation. Seeing how Fang Yuan reacted, Wu Lu became infuriated. "What kind of attitude is this?"

"Sigh... If a normal person is unable to detect it, so be it. Xiaoling, you have the ability of the Yin Yang Eye and have already been my apprentice for so long. How can you not detect anything?"

Fang Yuan gave a look of disappointment.

"What should I be looking out for?"

Xiaoling looked at the photograph, confused.

"The photograph... There's one more person!"

Wuyin means 'Without a reason or cause'.

Chapter 512: The Source

"Is there... one more person?"

Hearing that, she focused on the photograph and took out a small bottle of liquid before scattering it on the photograph.

"Sizzle!"

A layer of fog appeared. Only then did she realise that the group photo only consisted of 4 people!

The fifth 'person' was a charred and ferocious looking - evil ghost!

"This position..."

Ma Xiaoling suddenly raised her head and splashed the concoction in her hands. "Miss Wu, be careful!"

Wu Lu remained stunned as she gazed at Xiu Wen.

The boy whom she had slowly grown in love with became emotionless and slowly turned black. Within moments, he had turned into an entire charred corpse!

"Ahhhh!"

With a shriek, the black corpse disappeared before them.

"Why... why must it be him..."

Wu Lu sobbed silently. Suddenly, her mind went blank before her real memories came flooding back.

That's right! There were only 4 of them who went to the apartment! Lu Xia, Yang Guang, Bai Ling and herself! It was weird for there to be another person.

However, none of them even suspected anything!

This was because this ghost had altered their memories, forcing a 'Xiu Wen' into their minds.

To think about it, the cursed photograph was brought out of the apartment by Xiu Wen!

Furthermore, it was also Xiu Wen's idea to visit Master Liu! He knew all along that Master Liu was a quack and would not be able to help with the situation. With that, it resulted in Bai Ling's death!

"No... It's not like this... I remember seeing Xiu Wen and the ghost at the same time..."

Wu Lu shook her head and was on the verge of breaking down.

"It's simple... He either forced you to hallucinate seeing both him and the ghost, or that he has the ability to split himself!"

Fang Yuan turned serious as a gold hue flashed in his eyes.

Such a ghost with the ability to split itself and alter one's memories to toy with humans was already beyond the Spirit Level. It was a Murderous Level ghost!

Even a strong exorcist would have to be careful when dealing with a ghost of such a level!

"A Murderous Level ghost will be able to split itself into multiple entities. If we do not get hold of its source, we will not be able to deal with it! This ghost is harder to deal with compared to the one at the Chen Residences!"

Fang Yuan licked his lips. "This is also a good thing... A ghost of such a level is worthy for me to seal!"

His cultivation was already as high as the realm would allow it to be. If he wanted to become strong enough to deal with more powerful ghosts and curses, he had to increase his cultivation in his Spirit Sealing Body!

After exploring, Fang Yuan realised that the only requirement he had to fulfil to increase the cultivation of his Spirit Sealing Body was that he had to seal powerful ghosts and curses!

"Why..."

Wu Lu sobbed on the sofa, motionless. "Why... why do you want to toy with us?"

After experiencing a series of shocks, she had lost all hope for the world.

"Do you think you can help the situation just by crying?"

Fang Yuan glanced at her. "Let us discuss the price to pay for dealing with this 'ghost'! Because this ghost is already a 2nd Level ghost, we will require a higher price!"

"Be it my money, my life or my everything, I am willing to give it to you!"

Wu Lu shuddered before she gritted her teeth with determination. "As long as you will help me... take revenge!"

"Such a realisation... is this her final struggle as a survivor?"

Fang Yuan stood up and shrugged his shoulders. "Forget it... I understand. Leave the rest to me!"

"Daughter!"

At this point in time, Detective Ma finally snapped out of his trance as he cowardly hid behind his daughter. "You must protect Father and chase the ghost who dare to infiltrate our corporation out!"

After becoming rich, Ma Wencai naturally bought the entire corporation and transformed it into his own business.

What would happen if this place were to become haunted? It would be a disaster!

Detective Ma, a money grubber, would rather die with all the wealth he could possibly have.

"..."

Ma Xiaoling rolled her eyes. She held a test tube in her hands and

scanned her surroundings with alertness.

This evil ghost was powerful enough to be able to escape detection from her Yin Yang Eye all along. Now that it had disappeared, she was unable to trace it. The ghost now gave her a grave sense of danger.

"The real Murderous Level ghost will not need to appear in order to kill. It will be able to silence someone while remaining invisible... If humans were to encounter ghosts of such a level, they would stand almost no chance. However, this does not include me!"

Fang Yuan walked in a circle and the gold hue in his eyes started to flash brilliantly.

"Whoosh!"

In an instant, Fang Yuan made his way behind Wu Lu and struck a punch out. "Heavenly Eagle Fist!"

"Chirp! Chirp!"

As Fang Yuan struck his fist out, the joints in his body started to crackle under an extreme force and his blood started to surge quickly, turning him into a human fireball with his core temperature rising up continuously. In an instant, the entire office turned into a furnace.

Even though Fang Yuan was unable to restore his cultivation as a True Divine, there was still a hint of a True Divine's willpower in his martial arts.

"Bang!"

A dull collision sound was heard as 'something' was being smashed behind Wu Lu. The 3 others in the office did not detect anything before Fang Yuan had landed his fist.

"That's it!"

As soon as the ghost was being hit by Fang Yuan, Ma Xiaoling

could vaguely see an illusionary shadow. With that, she poured the concoction in her hands towards the shadow. "Reveal yourself!"

A charred corpse appeared as soon as the concoction landed on it. It was the ferocious ghost which Wu Lu and company had seen in the apartment! On its fours, the corpse was crawling about.

"Ahhh!"

Ma Wencai and Wu Lu screamed at the top of their lungs.

While they were still in shock, Fang Yuan took another step forward and forcefully stepped on the head of the charred corpse.

"Bang!"

The charred head exploded and the corpse disappeared once more.

"Is it dead?"

Ma Xiaoling remained dazed as she witnessed all that had happened.

Even she feared for her life the moment she saw this ghost. How could Fang Yuan so simply kill it with a single stomp?

Although she knew that Fang Yuan was powerful, she never knew that Fang Yuan was this powerful!

"No... It's not enough!"

Fang Yuan shook his head. Taking a few more steps, he rushed towards a wall and struck his fist out once more.

"Ohhh! No!!! That is my oil painting from the Renaissance period!"

Under Ma Wecai's shout, the painting and the wall behind it crumbled like sand. The charred corpse appeared once more and was being hit before it turned invisible again.

"Anger? Hatred? In bringing desolation to the world, what exactly are you?"

In the office, Fang Yuan whizzed about and was always fast enough to be able to catch the ghost. Every single time he encountered the ghost, he would use his brute force to smash it.

The 3 of them looked at Fang Yuan fighting the ghost and were utterly stunned.

"Being a split entity, this ghost will need time to restore its form..."

Fang Yuan was extremely clear about this. Every time he had hit the ghost, the ghost would need increased time to restore its form and now, it was taking up to 20 minutes.

"You've proved me wrong. You are not the end of the world. You are only a pile of mess!"

With a flying leap, Fang Yuan arrived at the main door of the office and stretched his hands out, strangling the charred corpse by its neck. "Dissipate!"

"Crackle!"

This split entity of a powerful ghost was being split into two!

Ma Xiaoling shivered. Quickly, the sinister vibes in the office faded away.

"It's done!"

Fang Yuan dusted his hands and walked towards a stunned Wu Lu. "We have some time now. Bring me to the apartment! Let's deal with its source once and for all!"

"Al... Alright!"

Wu Lu stared at Fang Yuan as though he was a God.

Just as she was forced to desperation, such a saviour would deserve her admiration and respect as she became a crazed believer of Fang Yuan. "Thank you! Thank you, Master!"

"Instead of saying all these, why not get moving? According to

you, you have another friend who is heading to the apartment, right?"

Fang Yuan glanced at her.

Fang Yuan was merely joking when he mentioned the price to pay for his services.

To Fang Yuan, the source of the Murderous Level ghost and the camera would be the real reward for helping her!

"Right, there's Yang Guang too!"

Wu Lu revealed a look of uneasiness on her face.

...

At the same time, outside the apartment.

Yang Guang was determined to destroy the camera no matter what.

However, the nearer he approached the apartment, the stronger the sinister vibes were. His determination quickly faded away and all the fear he had accumulated since the beginning seemed to have exploded inside him in an instant.

Finally, he could see the apartment from afar.

"Bai Ling..."

Yang Guang clenched his teeth and walked into the apartment.

In the dim environment, his muscles contracted and his heartbeat started to escalate. Unknowingly, his teeth started to chatter as well.

He was getting nearer and nearer!

As he arrived closer to where they had thrown the camera, his memories started to return.

"Xiu Wen... Something is not right, there isn't even a Xiu Wen to begin with!"

Yang Guang felt dizzy all of a sudden. "He is... a ghost! He has been with us all this while! Was he the one who killed Bai Ling too?"

Such a blow caused tears to well up in his eyes.

"Wu Lu! Wu Lu is in danger!"

As the person who was being targeted by the photograph and the fact that she was with the ghost all along, Wu Lu was like walking on a tightrope.

"This is the best chance! If I destroy the camera, I might be able to save Wu Lu!"

Since he was sure that the ghost was with Wu Lu all along, Yang Guang could now feel a burst of courage in him as he rushed into the room in the apartment.

Everything was in the same place since the day they took the group photograph and the camera was still on the shelf.

"That's it!"

Yang Guang scanned the surroundings before taking a step forward. He held the camera in his hands and flung it towards the wall!

"Crack!"

The camera shattered and parts of it flew in different directions. There was also a visible crack on the wall where the camera had hit.

"It's that simple?"

Yang Guang was in disbelief. How could he have destroyed the camera so easily?

"Regardless, the camera is now destroyed. The curse on the photograph should now be lifted, right?"

Before he could leave, a distinct crackle was heard.

Yang Guang froze in his steps. Forcefully, he turned his head around and saw... the wall which they had used as a background to take the photograph started to crumble, revealing a charred corpse in it!

The real source of the curse was never from the normal-looking camera, but... in this wall!

Chapter 513: Seal the Spirit

A Murderous Level ghost would be able to split itself.

Fang Yuan had only destroyed one of its entities.

This time, the 'truth' behind the crumbled wall was the source of everything!

"Ahhhh!"

Yang Guang shrieked and ran away as fast as possible.

"Rumble!"

The surroundings started to change. From an abandoned apartment, it slowly turned into the scene of a fire outbreak.

It was the same apartment but the furniture was all brand new. The scorching flames started to spread everywhere, even towards the corridors.

The intense inferno and thick black smoke filled Yang Guang's lungs as he began to feel discomfort. Immediately, he started to crouch on the floor and crawled towards safety.

"Could this be... the fire which this apartment had once experienced before? Why was the corpse hidden in the wall? Could it be possible that the property developer was hiding the truth from the media by sealing the corpse up in order to increase the value of this apartment?"

Yang Guang held his nose and carefully made his way around the apartment as he finally understood everything.

The apartment was rented to foreigners. These foreigners did not have a strong backing or good relationships with the locals. Therefore, even if they were to disappear or die, no one would know or miss them!

From all the signs, this was the most reasonable explanation.

"So what if I'm able to deduce all these?"

Yang Guang gazed at the raging inferno around him and felt that even his eyebrows were about to be burnt.

"Mum..."

"Save me..."

...

He could hear the screams for help and the struggles coming from the burning inferno as Yang Guang started to shiver in fear. "Something's not right... there might be more than 1 casualty in this fire!"

Even though he could deduce this, there was nothing he could do.

"The window... If I cannot escape by the door, I can try the windows!"

Although he didn't know how he had landed himself in the scene of a burning apartment, Yang Guang only had a single thought, and it was to survive!

The intensifying flames were distracting him, affecting his consciousness.

Finally, after crawling for a long while, a window appeared before him.

"This is great!"

He stood up and slammed the window hard to no avail, for it was locked.

"Sh*t!"

Behind him, there were all sorts of cries.

Yang Guang covered his face with a cloth and ran straight into the window.

"Crackle!"

He was an athlete in university and was strong to begin with. With that headbutt, he shattered the window and flew out of the apartment.

"Ahhh!"

As he cried, he tried to pluck out the shards embedded in his arms before examining his surroundings.

The flames were no longer there. It was as though all that had just happened was a mere illusion.

"I have survived!"

Yang Guang examined the apartment and shivered in fear before running away. "That camera is perfectly fine! The real source of trouble is this apartment and the wronged souls who were burnt to death here!"

After knowing this piece of important information, he knew that if he were to look into this, he would be able to lift the curse and set things right by making the one responsible for the fire to bear the consequences!

"Just that... why do I feel like I've become heavier?"

Yang Guang recalled that there seemed to be something riding on his back while he was crawling on the ground just now!

He shuddered and turned around as he came face to face with a charred face.

"Ahhhhhhh!"

Yang Guang screamed hysterically. As soon as he woke up, he realised that he was being trapped in darkness.

"Director, this isn't too good! By hiding a corpse in the wall... it's too unethical..."

"Do you know how much the company has lost after this fire? We don't even have enough money to compensate the affected families! Who would have the time to deal with these corpses?"

"But... the police..."

"There are just a few foreigners. There's nothing much in sealing them up in the walls. Don't worry, we have already bribed the news agencies. They will not report the true casualty rate!"

...

"This is... the wall which the corpses are buried in?"

Yang Guang wanted to struggle. However, the space around him was filled with cement and darkness and his movements were restricted.

Furthermore, a feeling of breathlessness started to overwhelm him.

"No... I am alive! Don't bury me!"

He tried to shout but nothing came out of his mouth.

Finally, his eyes were shut and he fell into an abyss of darkness...

...

"Yang Guang... is dead!"

Fang Yuan and Wu Lu had arrived at the apartment.

They arrived at the room and realised that the camera was destroyed. They also noticed the crumbled wall and the shape of a human body indented in the wall!

"It is useless to deal with the split entities. We need to target its true source..."

Fang Yuan stretched his right hand out to feel the indentation on the wall and could feel a burning sensation in it.

"Is this where... the source once was?"

He examined the surroundings. Suddenly, the space around them transformed into a burning inferno once again and thick smoke started to spread everywhere.

"Ahhhh!"

Wu Lu screamed as soon as she realised where she was.

"Don't worry. We are merely being pulled into an alternate dimension..."

Fang Yuan snickered.

If the 'ghost' was hiding its source and was only sending out its split entities, it would be troublesome for Fang Yuan. It would take up too much effort for one to even locate the exact location of the alternate dimension.

But now, it had intentionally pulled Fang Yuan and Wu Lu into its own dimension and therefore had unintentionally caused its own death.

Oh wait, a ghost was already dead from the beginning, so there was no death it could cause to itself.

"Cough cough... will I... die here?"

Wu Lu held her chest in pain as she sat on the ground.

In the alternate dimension, these flames were real flames. If they were engulfed by the smoke, they would truly die as well!

Suddenly, from the flames, charred corpses began to appear. They varied in size but all of them had hatred in their eyes as they surrounded Fang Yuan and Wu Lu.

"Was the powerful curse created from the hatred of these wronged souls who died in the fire?"

Fang Yuan nodded his head and a streak of chilly energy started to surround him.

A chill which would be able to freeze one's soul started to spread out and within a few moments, it had covered the entire house.

The flames disappeared in that instant and even the toxic fumes were slowly being dissipated.

"Impressive!"

Wu Lu stood up and was shocked. As she looked at Fang Yuan, she shuddered in fear.

"Are you scared of me?"

Fang Yuan glanced at her before taking a quick look at his own stats window.

In the brackets behind his Spirit Sealing Body, a new status appeared: Spirit Sealing Body (Partially released!)

"If I release the ghost entirely, I will likely lose control of it and thereby allow it to target me. If I were to release it partially, it would mean for me to release the seal by a little, harnessing the power of the ghost in me or even make use of its abilities! It feels like I'm borrowing my strength from something else."

Fang Yuan could feel a chilly sensation spreading from his body as he started to smile.

This technique was discovered by him after all these years.

Looking at his personality, if he did not perform enough research on the Spirit Sealing Body, he would not have recklessly increased its cultivation.

"There are still risks involved when I use my human body to control the power of a ghost! I not only have to deal with the risk of the ghost attempting to take over me, I will have to watch out for myself being harmed in the process as well... However, my body is already not as weak as a normal human, but as powerful as the realm allows me to be! If I will still be harmed by such physical conditions, I will just be a mere laughing stock even if I am the realm's final hope!"

Of course, Wu Lu did not know what Fang Yuan was thinking.

Nervously, she gazed at Fang Yuan. The young man Fang Yuan once was started to turn pale and his face turned into a green-

purple hue. His pair of eyes turned into a brilliant gold.

Anyone would feel the chills if they were to look at Fang Yuan, for it would be as though they were looking at... a real 'ghost'!

"I see you!"

Fang Yuan revealed a sinister smile.

By harnessing the power of the evil ghost sealed in and using his Fiery Golden Eyes, he could see through the alternate dimension, to where the source of the ghost was.

"Scan... Locate..... The next step will be to... capture!"

His body turned illusionary in an instant and his arms turned greenish-purple as though he was a frozen corpse. With that, he stretched his arms into mid-air.

In the depths of the alternate dimension.

An indescribable and unknown presence was being captured!

Even an exorcist could only deal with the simplest spirits!

But now, Fang Yuan was able to capture the source of a... Murderous Level ghost!

"Come out!"

Fang Yuan exclaimed.

Wu Lu's eyes were wide opened as she witnessed Fang Yuan 'pulling' out a charred corpse from mid-air.

Even a single look at the charred corpse caused extreme pain in her eyes and fear began to overwhelm her.

The true source of the ghost could not be described and did not have a definite shape.

"Seal!"

In Fang Yuan's chest, a silver swirl appeared and the entire charred corpse was being swallowed into it.

Of course, the Murderous Level ghost was struggling in Fang Yuan's arms. Unfortunately, Fang Yuan remained emotionless as he absorbed the corpse. Slowly, the corpse became smaller and smaller and finally, it became a small black dot which completely disappeared in the swirl.

"Phew..."

Fang Yuan took in a deep breath and sealed the ghosts in him completely, reverting himself to the appearance of a normal human.

The space around them started to warp, transforming itself into the abandoned apartment it once was.

After sealing the 'source', the curse on the apartment was completely lifted!

Fang Yuan took a quick glance at this stats:

"Name: Fang Yuan (Tantai Mieming)

Essence: 15.0 (100)

Spirit: 15.0 (100)

Magic: 15.0 (100)

Profession: Exorcist

Technique: Exorcism (Peak), Pharmacy (Peak), Eagle Claw Grappling Technique (Peak)

Skill: \[Medicine (Level 3)\], \[Botany (Level 6)\], \[Fiery Golden Eyes (Level 1)\], \[Spirit Sealing Body (2nd Grade)\]"

'Spirit Sealing Body (2nd Grade): Your body is a weapon which is able to seal evil ghosts. You will be able to seal any ghost that you come into contact with into your body! You have activated the 2nd Grade, and the capacity for sealing evil ghosts: 2! You can choose to release the ghost!'

"I am able to increase the physical limitations of my body just by

sealing this ghost?"

Fang Yuan was a little shocked. "I am truly the Fate Soul of this realm! My existence cannot be comprehended with normal logic!"

Chapter 514: Two People

"It's a pity... not every ghost deserves to be sealed by me!"

Fang Yuan thought about the ghost in the Chen Residences.

In the past few years, it had turned into Fang Yuan's punching bag. The last time Fang Yuan had attacked it, it was too severely injured that it no longer appeared in recent years.

"Of course, all of these experiences did serve me well."

Fang Yuan gazed at Wu Lu and his eyes glistened. "Release!"

Wu Lu involuntarily took a step back.

From her point of view, 6 burn scars lined Fang Yuan's face and his eyes turned bloodshot.

"This Murderous Level ghost is... rather useful!"

Under the red glow coming from the ghost, Wu Lu appeared dazed.

"I am now able to infiltrate the mind of others and alter their memories... This is rather similar to that of a dream master!"

Fang Yuan immediately released the ability of the Murderous Level ghost from this apartment.

"Now, return to school and forget everything that has happened!"

Fang Yuan was already well-versed in tampering with the memories of others as he directly altered them. "Yang Guang and the 2 others died from an accident!"

"They... died from an accident!"

Wu Lu mumbled to herself as she appeared dazed. Slowly, she walked out of the apartment like a zombie.

"It isn't good for her to keep these memories... sigh, I'm such a kind person!"

Fang Yuan rubbed his chin. "However... the curse of the 'Door' is still beyond my comprehension!"

He raised his hands and his face was still that of the Murderous Level ghost from the apartment. A chilly vibe started to spread from his hands and his skin turned dark-purple.

"I have no problem in releasing different abilities from different ghosts at the same time... Is the curse created by the Tantai Family so weak?"

Fang Yuan had long detected the anomaly in the ghost within his body.

The being which the Tantai Family had placed their hopes on needed to be at least a 'Strange' Level and therefore of a certain power.

However, this ghost was just too weak!

"This is the result of being damaged by the 'Door'!"

Fang Yuan subconsciously recalled the scene where he escaped from the Tantai Family.

The 20-year cycle was about to return and the appearance of the 'Door' would kill off all the descendants of the Tantai Family!

"The ghost which I had released not only dealt with the elders of the Tantai Family, it was also being targeted by the Door. Therefore, it gave me time to escape"

Fang Yuan appeared solemn.

He knew that at that point in time, even if he was able to escape from the Tantai Family, the Door would never have let him pass. He was only able to smoothly escape because of the ghost. The ghost had become a scapegoat for Fang Yuan, giving him enough time to make his escape.

"Even so, how could this 'Strange' Level ghost end up as a mere 'Murderous' Level ghost after being severely injured?"

'Strange' meant that the ghost would be strange and unpredictable!

This experience of toying with humans and altering their memories was only a child's play.

The truly strange and unpredictable act would be, for instance, warping time and space, messing around with karma and even making one think that he was alive even after killing him!

Even a top-notch exorcist would die without knowing why it encountered a Strange Level ghost.

"Anything that is Strange would affect the entire area. If it appears, it will affect hundreds or even thousands of people... and the effect might last for over a hundred years, affecting the descendants of those affected as well..."

As for why there was so little information about such beings, Fang Yuan predicted that these Strange beings had the ability to control information over a large area. Therefore, they were able to alter all news, reports and even the attention of the humans within the area, allowing them to be unaware of these obvious 'anomalies'!

"Such Strange beings... it will be rare to encounter them."

Fang Yuan felt that if anyone else, even exorcists, were to hear his theory, they would most probably think that he was mad.

These were things which others did not want to encounter. However, he wanted to actively seek for such a presence.

"It's a pity... I don't know where to start. Do I really need to explore the entire world?"

Fang Yuan sighed. "I could probably expand Ma Wencai's reputation and even release some information regarding his identity... in an attempt to attract even more exorcists here!"

To him, this was no longer a period of staying low.

Before the 20-year cycle returned, he had to attempt to seal as many ghosts as possible to increase his own abilities! For the final showdown!

For that, his initial plan of hiding in Ma Wencai's office would no longer work out. He had to immerse himself into the community of exorcists of this world.

Fang Yuan slowly mulled over his own future as he casually hailed a cab and returned to the Ma Paranormal Detective Corporation.

"How did it go?"

Ma Xiaoling welcomed Fang Yuan back as she gazed at her friend-cum-teacher nervously.

"Don't worry... it's been settled!"

Fang Yuan revealed a relaxed smile.

"That's great..."

Ma Xiaoling patted her chest and heaved a deep breath. "That female student is such a poor thing..."

"Instead of talking about her, why not think about what we should eat for dinner."

Fang Yuan casually retorted and Ma Wencai nodded his head violently. It was obvious that he was hungry too.

"Alright! I shall cook up a feast tonight!"

Ma Xiaoling's culinary skills were rather impressive, especially after Fang Yuan's guidance. She could go out and become a chef and no one would suspect anything. As soon as she donned her apron, she seemed to have transformed into a different person. "I shall bake a cake first. If any of you are hungry, you can have that as an appetizer."

...

Just as Fang Yuan was enjoying Xiaoling's strawberry cake.

A long train slowly came to a halt as it arrived at a station. A male in a brown jacket wearing a cap and carrying a suitcase walked out to the station platform.

"My home... Never would I have thought that I will return here!"

His right eye had an obvious knife scar which gave him a ferocious look. Fortunately, he did not go blind because of the scar.

"Hey... Brother, Sister-in-law, it's me! Bingqi!"

He came to a public phone, tossed a coin in and dialled a number. "I heard about Xia's death! He is still my nephew no matter what! Funeral? I won't be going already. It isn't a good thing if I were to meet up with you guys now! Didn't I say that we have to cut all ties before?"

Lu Bingqi cut the call even though there were sounds of crying on the other side. With that, his expression turned into a stern one. "Regardless if it is a person or a 'thing', as long as you touch my nephew, I will make you pay! Even if it means costing my life!"

"Ahh!"

At this point in time, Lu Bingqi suddenly held his right eye as blood seeped through his fingers.

"It's... It's coming again!"

He lowered his palm, revealing his bloodied right eye. Scarily, this eye suddenly turned white.

Lu Bingqi closed his left eye. With only his right eye, he could see a shadow flashing by across the public phone.

"It's... that thing! It has followed me all the way here!"

In that instant, Lu Bingqi could see scratch marks as the entire public phone booth crumbled. Blood started to flow from it, turning the entire place into a pool of blood.

"Run!"

Calmly, he pushed the glass door of the booth open and fled.

"This person..."

"He's crazy!"

"Did he see a ghost?"

...

The people who were queuing behind him could only see a weird man stumbling his way out of the telephone booth as though he was running for his life.

"Rumble!"

In the next moment, a huge truck out of control rammed into the telephone booth, crumbling it.

The few who could not escape in time turned into a pile of bloodied mess. Their limbs flew about and blood spewed everywhere.

"Weewoo Weewooo!"

Not long after, the fire engine and ambulance had arrived at the scene and got to work immediately.

From a corner not far away, Lu Bingqi witnessed everything as his right eye slowly turned to normal. "It has killed another 3 people... It is too reckless!"

It was a shock for him to encounter such a scene as soon as he returned to his homeland.

"Time passes very quickly. It has been 5 to 6 years since then... Never would I have thought that I will return home under such circumstances!"

Lu Binqi zipped up his windbreaker and disappeared among the crowd.

...

"Master..."

At the same time, a person dressed up as a monk started to walk away from the station. As he witnessed the bloody scene, he closed his eyes and started to recite a mantra. "Many of you have died in inexplicable ways. However, I have instructions from my Master to resolve the issue at hand. If I am able to survive that, I will surely return to perform a ritual for all of you to find peace! Namō Amitufo!"

"Hey... monk, where are you going?"

A cab driver smiled. "I can bring you there!"

"Please don't. I have legs and it is already wrong for me to take the train this time... Since I have arrived at my destination, I need to complete the journey by walking!"

"Keke, what a monk! You are as stupid as those Masters!"

The cab driver smiled. "Where are you going? I can give you the general direction!"

"I will be thankful for that! I am going to the Chen Residences of the Red River Village!"

The young monk placed his hands together. "Do you happen to know where it is?"

"Chen Residences? Are you after the bounty? If that is so, you're late..."

"Bounty?"

The monk was stunned. "I have no idea about that. Please elaborate, if you will."

In his heart, he was shocked. 'Master had gone down the wrong path and was confused by a curse. Since then, he had sinned too many times. As his disciple, I cannot follow his path and I can only try to make it up for his wrongdoings. The issue at the Chen Residences was taken over from Master as well... sigh, since the

wrongdoing has already been committed, it is already too late to regret!"

"Alright!"

Since the cab driver was had no business, he did not mind a small chat. With that, he started to explain everything that happened in the Chen Residences and the young monk was in disbelief.

"The ghost has been discovered? The government sealed up the residences? The paranormal issue in the residences had been resolved? The Ma Paranormal Detective Corporation?"

Chapter 515: The Monk

The Chen Residences.

Ever since news of the ghost appearing in the residences spread, the price of property around the residences plunged. Not long after, the government had intervened to seal up the place and there were a few strange scientists conducting investigations in the residences every now and then.

Unfortunately, 3 to 4 years ago, the ghost had already disappeared. After many rounds of investigations, the researchers and scientists had to concur with the results. They had shifted most of their manpower away and only left 1 to security guards to guard the place.

"Sigh... this is boring. When will days like this end?"

In a police post before the Chen Residences, a young policeman yawned. "I've heard that this place was haunted! Is that so?"

"Hehe... Don't think about it!"

Beside him, a middle-aged policeman took a deep breath on his cigar. "At that time... you wouldn't know how scary it was inside. Whoever entered the residences will die a gruesome death... At that time, we would draw lots to decide who to take the shift here."

"Could there be... a real ghost?"

The young policeman took a quick look at the abandoned residences and shivered in fear

"What else do you think there was?"

The middle-aged policeman scoffed. "Our task now is much simpler. We just have to prevent all the reckless paranormal lovers from entering... Although there is no danger in the residences now, no one can be absolutely sure. In fact, we are only here to remind them of the possible dangers. If they are still stubborn,

then there's nothing we can do."

"Wait up..... I think I see one of them!"

The young man rubbed his eyes as he looked at a person dressed up as a monk walking into the residences.

"F*ck, are my eyes playing tricks on me? He's walking really fast!"

"No... This person seems real, I can see him too!"

The middle-aged policeman nodded his head solemnly. "This person seems to be a true Master with some cultivation!"

"What should we do? Should we follow him?"

"We'll go back to sleep!"

The middle-aged policeman rolled his eyes. "This Master might not be afraid of ghosts, but we sure are! What if something happens inside? They will surely blame it on us! The only thing we should do now is to prepare a report!"

"Chen Residences!"

At this point in time, the young monk had arrived at the residences and a look of sorrow was displayed on his face. "That fateful year... my Master became evil and coincidentally encountered Chen Xinbo who was grieving over his daughter's death. Therefore, he made use of Chen Xinbo to nurture a ghost!"

His Master was a powerful monk and a respectable one too. However, because of something bad that had happened to him, his personality changed and he turned evil.

Of course, Chen Xinbo wouldn't know all of these. Instead, he wholeheartedly trusted the monk and did not bury his daughter's remains. Instead, he had put in place a ritual in hopes of recalling his daughter's soul back.

However, it was not long before another monk found out about this Master's doings. This Master had unfortunately died and was not able to rectify all of these here, which resulted in a tragedy.

"Amitufo... I am unable to complete the ritual to allow the wronged souls to seek peace. I can only recite the Rebirth in Pure Land Mantra 999 times to strengthen the seal... but now..."

He examined the surroundings. Although everywhere was in a mess, there were no sinister vibes.

"This is the place where the ritual to recall the soul was conducted, right?"

Following his gut feelings, he arrived at the second floor before entering the room where the ritual was conducted.

The room was already in a mess. Remains of the corpse or even their property were already taken away by the authorities for further investigation.

"The ghost... it is indeed being dealt with already!"

The young monk examined the surroundings and heaved a sigh of relief. "This is a good deed!" I shall engrave the words of the Mantra of Vajrasattva in the vicinity to allow this evil ghost to remain in hibernation for an even longer period of time... Could Ma Wencai be a monk who specialises in exorcism too?"

He initially thought that this would be a perilous task. Never would he knew that he would accomplish it so easily.

The monk was jubilant and started to appreciate Ma Wencai for what he had done.

Buddhism was all about karma.

This was something which his Master had caused and therefore it was something he had to return.

If someone else helped him resolved the issue, although the problem at the Chen Residences would have been resolved, he would have to repay the favour.

"Eh? That master is coming out!"

In the police post, the two policemen wanted to chase after him.

Suddenly, they were being attracted by the happenings in the Chen Family.

In there, one of the walls suddenly started to glow in a brilliant gold hue as engraved runes filled the walls. In an instant, the glow dimmed and became no more.

"A Master! A true Master indeed!"

The young policeman gasped. Unfortunately, before he could go up to the monk, the monk was long gone.

...

"It will be good to establish good ties with them!"

The monk was extremely quick as he moved. However, he was able to retain his calm composure as he rushed his way, which was indeed impressive.

"The issue at Chen Residences is settled. Next up will be to pay a visit to the Ma Paranormal Detective Corporation!"

He mumbled to himself but soon after, he appeared confused. "Ma Wencai? I have never heard of him in The Exorcists Alliance! Sigh... since 15 years ago, the Tantai Family no longer came out and the entire world is slowly turning into a mess..."

15 years ago, the Tantai Family was the most powerful among the exorcists in The Exorcists Alliance!

Everyone who came from the Tantai Family had exceptional abilities. However, the entire family disappeared without a trace all of a sudden which made many of them feel that their absence was regretful.

"However, before Master turned evil, he did mention that everyone in the Tantai Family is cursed... With this curse, it seems like they must have encountered some sort of danger..."

Even he was unwilling to be pessimistic about it.

After all, if the Tantai Family, the most powerful family of

exorcists were to be wiped out, this would mean that all hope for mankind would be lost.

"Buddha... If you are truly existent, please let this world become normal!"

The monk sighed. Suddenly, he froze in his steps. "That is..."

"Pa!"

A man in a windbreaker knocked into him. At that moment, extreme fear filled the monk's heart.

"Amitufofo..."

He started to continuously chant his mantra as his hands shivered in fear. "Such a feeling... It seems as though I had seen the person who had turned Master evil... It is hell! Everyone, including the grandmasters, had done their best. Did it have no effect at all?"

According to his Master's revelation just before he died, the monk knew that there was the existence of 'hell' in the realm.

Even his Master could be affected by the demon before turning evil to commit all the wrongdoings.

For that, the few grandmasters who were living in isolation were shocked. They came down the mountain in anger and wanted to seal up this 'hell'.

However, they never returned and the young monk always thought that the new grandmasters had combined forces and were annihilated together with the 'hell'. Never would he have thought that this being would still be in the realm, peering into the souls of humans without restraint!

"This issue... I cannot ignore it! Also... I will have to investigate where my grandmasters ended up!"

The young monk had come to a conclusion for himself and seemed determined.

He came from the Golden Mountain Monastery and was once

part of the exorcists. They were only second to the Tantai Family at that time.

However, because of that so-called 'hell', most of the powerful beings of the monastery were wiped out and what was left were a few weak monks.

Until now, he was the only one who was powerful enough to start exploring the outside world!

This was a vengeance for the entire Monastery and he had to avenge all of them!

'Although I do not know where it is, I remember Master telling me that this being has the ability to see through one's weaknesses... Has it arrived here? I need to investigate further!'

The young monk silently chanted a mantra and an invisible palm print landed on the body of the man in the windbreaker.

'Indeed... Our spiritual auras have merely come into contact and I can already feel so much fear...'

He shook his head and did not follow that man. Instead, he stuck to his original plan and arrived at the Ma Paranormal Detective Corporation.

"Amitufo! I wish to see the owner!"

"Eh?"

Ma Wencai was in his pyjamas and a toothbrush stuck out of his mouth. He revealed a disgusted expression. "We do not give donations here. We do not provide vegetarian food as well!"

"Father! Is that how you treat guests?"

Ma Xiaoling rolled her eyes. "Master, please take a seat. Have you encountered any troubles?"

"No... I am here to thank all of you for what you've done at the Chen Residences!"

The monk placed his palms together and displayed a look of disappointment as he looked at Ma Wencai. As he examined Ma Xiaoling, he nodded his head. "A comrade indeed!"

"Comrade? Eh? Are you talking about me?"

Ma Xiaoling pointed to herself.

"Since you have the Yin Yang Eye, you are therefore a comrade. Are you not the one who resolved the issue at the Chen Residences?"

The monk sounded a little confused.

"It's me... and it's also not me! That is resolved by the colleagues here at the corporation, but it's not just me!"

Ma Xiaoling revealed a look of embarrassment. "I'll help you call for him. Although Yuan has always been lazy and is mostly unwilling to meet strangers, he has become diligent recently. Oh, Master, what do I address you by?"

"Amitufo..... [My Buddhist name is Jiese!](#)"

"Pfft!"

Before Ma Xiaoling could react, Ma Wencai spat the water from his mouth before laughing. "Jie... Jiese? Wahahaha... Why would you have such a name, little monk?"

"Amitufo. Everything is fleeting, so why would a name matter?"

Master Jiese spoke in a serious tone. However, his slightly flushed face showed that he still knew what his name meant.

"Just admit it... you're a lustful monk!"

...

"Jiese?"

In the backyard, Fang Yuan overheard their conversation and felt interested. "Alright! Just by this name alone, I feel that it's worth to meet this monk!"

He arrived at the living room and met Master Jiese.

Master Jiese was very young. However, his muscles were bulging which showed that he was well-versed in his martial arts. Furthermore, there was a Buddhist vibe lingering around him, which was the rare sign that this person had a true cultivation in Buddhism.

"I am Fang Yuan. Master Jiese, are you here regarding the issue at the Chen Residences?"

"That's right... My Master's mistake resulted in a huge problem. As his disciple, I can only try my best to make up for it..."

Jiese the Monk started to explain what had happened years ago and started to look at Fang Yuan in a different light.

Ever since he had come down from the mountains, he had never come across a person which he was unable to see through.

Jiese means 'To abstain from lust'

Chapter 516: Pawnshop

"The Exorcists Alliance?"

After probing, Fang Yuan received shocking information from Jiese the Monk. "There is such an organisation in the world?!"

"Of course!"

Jiese the Monk smiled but was utterly stunned.

How could such a powerful exorcist not know the existence of The Exorcists Alliance? He was like a barbarian living in the woods!

"What an organisation..."

Upon hearing their conversation, Ma Xiaoling's mouth was agape.

"The Exorcists Alliance is an international organisation with many members from different countries. For instance, the Curse Magicians and Vermin Lords from Southeast Asia, as well as the Black Magicians and Pastors from the West... Everyone will exchange information with each other and help each other out... After all, against these threats, we humans are just too weak! Amitufo..."

Jiese the Monk revealed a look of desolation and resembled a respectable monk in that instant.

"If that is so... Master Jiese, you only know the existence of the Chen Residences after reading the scrolls left behind by your master, Master Yunhai..."

Fang Yuan was speechless. "You must be really kind! It has already been so many years since that incident!"

"That's right!"

This was a piece of memory etched into Ma Xiaoling's mind. "If not for Brother Fang Yuan who saved us, my father and I would've

died in there."

"Amitufo... I'm really sorry to hear this!"

Jiese the Monk placed his palms together in front of his chest. "I did not receive my Master's belongings after his death. That piece of record was only passed to me by the elders after I had left the mountains after my training."

"It seems like the elders are even afraid of you as well and had already lost all hope of bringing the Monastery back together..."

Fang Yuan started to feel interested. "Monk, what are your plans after this?"

"Since the issue at the Chen Residences has been settled, I will prepare to avenge my Master... The 'Hell' which had tempted my Master to the dark side is still living in the world. I had only just come across one of its traders."

Jiese the Monk spoke the truth.

"Hell? I'm interested in this!"

Fang Yuan raised his cup of coffee. "Can you tell me more about it in detail?"

"I only heard about this from my elders as well as from the records. I do not know much about it. The only thing I know is that this 'Hell' is a building in the alternate dimension. Therefore, it is able to appear in any part of the world and influence humans to do its bidding!"

"That place seems like a breeding ground for all sorts of curses and ghosts. In the Recalling Spirit Ritual at the Chen Residences, I suspect that 'it' had influenced Master Yunhai to do its bidding. After all, the Golden Mountain Monastery is only known for exorcism and peace-seeking rituals, not the Recalling Spirit Ritual."

"Oh? Who would've guessed that this would be the truth?"

Fang Yuan nodded his head. With a large affected area and a building in an alternate dimension, together with the ability to create curses, the source of this ghost might just be one at the 'Strange' Level!

'Is my fate changing?'

Fang Yuan was elated but he remained composed on the outside. "If there is really such a place, it will be the nightmare for mankind. I've decided to help Master in dealing with this Hell!"

"Amitufo! You..."

Jiese the Monk was stunned beyond words. This was the first time someone had volunteered themselves after hearing about the terrors of the Hell.

"There's nothing more to say. It's my mission to protect the peace in this world!"

Fang Yuan spoke with justice as Ma Xiaoling and Ma Wencai rolled their eyes.

"Regardless, it is great that you are willing to help me!"

Although he did not know why Fang Yuan would take the initiative to help him, it was still a good thing for him to gain such a powerful ally. Jiese the Monk quickly thanked Fang Yuan.

"Oh and one thing... how does the building look like?"

"Rumour has it that... it should be a pawnshop!"

...

"Huff! Huff!"

At the same time, in a small motel.

Lu Bingqi was on all fours as he breathed heavily like a dog. It was as though he was being saved from drowning. "Finally... it has ended! This is the time, activate, pawnshop!"

He took out something which resembled a black name card, bit

on his own thumb and smeared the blood on it.

In that instant, the dirty and stuffy room suddenly began to transform.

A dark alternate dimension had transcended!

"Whoooo! Whoooo!"

There was a dark fog all around and a full moon was high in the night sky. A modern-looking pawnshop appeared before Lu Bingqi and the walls of the pawnshop were covered in green ghostly flames.

"Paranormal Pawnshop!"

Lu Bingqi clenched his teeth. He pushed the door open and walked down a familiar path into a room.

In the room, there was only a chair. As he sat on the chair, a bright flash sparkled before him, forming a row of twisted-looking words:

"Escaping from the life-threatening evil ghost alive, completed! You can initiate 1 trade!"

"We're back here!"

Lu Bingqi rubbed his right eye and recalled the first time he had come to the Paranormal Pawnshop.

He had the dream to explore the world when he was younger and had left his hometown to make a name for himself. Although reality gave him a tight slap, he was still able to survive in a foreign country.

However, a sudden car crash destroyed all that he had.

The impact of the car crash was still fresh in his mind. As soon as he woke up, he was already here! This was the true... Hell!

'You are already dead! Now, you have two choices. Firstly, you can leave here to complete your death! Secondly, you can sign a

contract and pawn your dead soul in exchange for a revival!'

This was the first offer he had come across in the pawnshop.

Since he knew that he was already dead, nothing could be worse. Of course, Lu Bingqi would choose the second option.

When he woke up again, he realised that he had returned to the real world, where the car crash was. He was uninjured, but no one was shocked at the accident. To put things into context, he had turned into a pile of bloodied mess just moments ago!

Therefore, he now entirely trusted the powers of the pawnshop and knew that his dead soul would forever belong to the pawnshop!

However, this first trade was only the beginning of a series of nightmares!

"I have passed this year's tribulation... Because I do not belong here, I will have to face the life-threatening evil ghost every year on my death day. I need to continuously trade with the pawnshop in order to stay alive!"

The scar on Lu Bingqi's face started to hurt.

Of course, the pawnshop was not a charitable organisation. In exchange for an eye which was able to see paranormal activity, Lu Bingqi had to give up his entire right eye and had to face a ghost for 3 straight days in a graveyard! It was an experience which almost drove him crazy!

"Sometimes, the pawnshop will request for our lifespan, and other times they will request us to complete a certain task. Most of the time, these tasks will involve endangering us under curses... It is almost like this pawnshop owner is a psychopath who will take joy from looking at us escape death. Finally, he will harvest our injured souls!"

Similar to a conventional pawnshop, the Paranormal Pawnshop was like a vampire.

They had already put in place traps during the first trade to revive. Those who were fortunate enough to revive would have to continue to trade in order to stay alive.

If one were to be fortunate enough to survive the annual encounter with the life-threatening ghost, they would gain an opportunity to trade in the pawnshop and no one would give up such an opportunity.

"To newcomers, the first encounter with the life-threatening ghost will be the most dangerous. However, once they survive it, they will be able to engage in a trade to strengthen themselves. Of course, since this will be their first trade since their revival, the pawnshop will give them a discount. They will not require them to complete any task but instead will just draw from their lifespan, joy or flesh to strengthen them. It is as though they want us to become stronger so they can further toy with us!"

Lu Bingqi sighed as he felt extreme fatigue all over his body.

However, through some 'Experienced Seniors', he had gained some insider information.

If he was able to pay the price, he would be able to redeem his own soul back!

If not for this, most customers of the pawnshop would have given up hope.

"It is rumoured that if I engage in more than 7 trades, the option to redeem my soul will appear!"

Lu Bingqi didn't know if this rumour was true. However, he could only choose to believe it.

"The pawnshop is not a charitable organisation. In theory, you will be able to request anything from it as long as you are able to pay for it!"

Lu Bingqi held his chest. "Pawnshop, How much will I have to pay if I want to avenge my nephew, Lu Xia?"

"Rumble!"

The green glow faded before him, but there were no new words.

Lu Bingqi felt a sense of familiarity. "It is unable to complete. Could it be because I don't have enough to trade? Could Xia have really died in an accident? No... I've checked before. There are 2 deaths and 1 missing person during that period. How can such a strange death be normal? If not for the fact that Wu Lu had lost her memory, I could've known even more about Xia's death... As of now, it seems like it is related to a certain curse from a ghost?"

Lu Qingqi had heard many experiences of his experienced seniors taking up such tasks.

They either had to unseal a certain ghost or spread a certain curse. Regardless, all the tasks were evil and dangerous.

"Pawnshop!"

Thinking about this, Lu Bingqi clenched his teeth. "I shall change my request. I want to know the truth behind my nephew, Lu Xia's death!"

"Rumble!"

Flames erupted before him and a streak of green words appeared:

Pawnshop contract: To gain the truth behind Lu Xia's death!

Price: Unseal the ghost in the Chen Residences within 7 days from now. Stay in the residences for a night after unsealing the ghost!

...

"It is not a request for my lifespan or flesh, but instead, a task to unseal a ghost!"

Lu Bingqi sighed.

As soon as the words glowed before him, it would that the contract would take effect immediately and he had to accomplish

it! As long as he completed the task, he would be able to know the truth behind Lu Xia's death!

On this, the pawnshop was still worthy enough to be trusted.

"However, this is a huge price to pay for just knowing the truth behind his death..."

Lu Bingqi remained solemn. In the eyes of the pawnshop, an effective contract would mean that the things being traded were of equal value.

"Is there something remarkable in the truth?"

He mumbled to himself. This was the only explanation as to why the price to pay would be so high!

Chapter 517: Overcome

"This is the trader from the Pawnshop?"

While Lu Bingqi returned to reality and began to make preparations for the unleashing of the spirits, he had no idea that Fang Yuan and Jiese the Monk were watching him.

"Amitufo, that's right! I thought it was strange when I left the bus station, then when I met this person again, I was very sure that he was a trader from the Pawnshop!"

Jiese the Monk clasped his hands together and shouted out the name of Buddha.

Fang Yuan found that this little monk not only had a solid grounding in cultivation, but was also intelligent.

This person had placed a tracking imprint on Fang Yuan upon meeting him for merely the first time. This was a clear indication of his devious nature.

Nevertheless, in the current day and age, it was necessary to employ underhanded tactics in order to deal with more unscrupulous enemies.

"Something is wrong!"

Fang Yuan and Jiese covered up their tracks and began to travel back to where they came from. In the end, they still managed to make it to the Chen Residences.

"Indeed... the Spirit Recalling Ritual that my Master had imparted to Chen Xinbo is another one of the Pawnshop's creations..."

Lu Bingqi had already closed a few deals with the Pawnshop and was uncommonly skilled. He had dispatched of the two guards easily and strode into the Chen Residences unopposed.

Jiese the Monk let out a sigh as he witnessed the scene.

"This person has ill intentions. If he releases the evil spirits, the consequences will be dire. He must be stopped..."

"Oh, are you talking about the ghost in the Chen Residences?"

Fang Yuan grinned.

"That's nothing much to worry about. Let's wait and see for now."

Even if a paranormal entity like that appeared, Fang Yuan would destroy it all the same.

.....

"Damn it!"

Lu Bingqi wandered deep into the building and came to the elder daughter's room. His right eye suddenly became bloodshot and his pupils dilated. He cast a sweeping glance and cursed loudly.

"What the heck...why are there so many talismans placed here? Which bloody monk did this..."

Although these talismans were not very effective against spirits, they could at least discourage evil spirits from convening in the area.

Without hesitation, Lu Bingqi took out his little knife, black dog's blood and other tools, and began to vandalise the walls so as to drown out the spiritual light emanating from it.

It was dusk and the stars were out by the time he was finished.

Lu Bingqi sucked in a deep breath and took out a piece of green jade. He then pressed it to a hollow on the floor.

This was the original location in which Chen Xinbo devised the Spirit Recalling Ritual, and he had reactivated it!

Since he was to release the spirit through the ritual, he had obviously brought along the necessary tools.

The piece of jade was translucent and he could see veiny traces of

red in it.

In truth, the red lines were the products of hatred and blood, and when the jade was added into the array, it would become the key to releasing the evil spirit.

"I cannot expect a malevolent spirit such as this to thank me upon its release. It is more likely to kill me!"

Lu Bingqi gulped.

But the agreement was already in place and he could not back out now.

The Pawnshop had decreed that he stay here for a night after releasing the evil spirit. He had to do it!

Or else, they would tag another evil spirit to him for the rest of his life, and he would suffer a terrible fate.

To break a contract with the Pawnshop was to suffer a fate worse than death!

This piece of advice was given to him by countless people, and he would never forget it.

"Amitufo, I cannot bear to witness this any longer!"

Jiese the Monk pounced on Lu Bingqi in a flash and snatched over the piece of blood jade.

"I cannot let this spirit be revived and run amok as a menace!"

"Where did you come from, monk? Don't interfere in my business!"

Lu Bingqi spoke coldly with every intention to kill.

He was prepared to do anything just so he could survive. Also, he had done enough deals with the Pawnshop to acquire a few special abilities.

For example, his right eye was able to detect paranormal activity and entities.

"You have desecrated this place, a site set up by my Master...how can you say that this isn't my business?"

Jiese the Monk was simmering with anger and broke out into an attacking stance.

He was not afraid, for he knew that the Buddha would look out for him and aid him in dealing with demonic creatures!

"Hmph, seems like you are tired of living!"

Lu Bingqi was aware of this monk's background and knew that there was no way to resolve this peacefully. He glared at Jiese the Monk.

"Don't blame me if you die!"

Out of his right eye, he could see the aura surrounding Jiese the Monk becoming thicker.

At the same time, Jiese the Monk had a premonition of the other party extinguishing his aura, which would lead to dire consequences. He immediately flew forward and threw out his right palm.

"Veda Palm!"

Pak!

Lu Bingqi sent his fist flying and retreated. It was clear that he was skilled in the martial arts and was quite the formidable fighter.

In a blink, the two had traded multiple blows. It was a stalemate.

"Wow...what a boring fight!"

Fang Yuan yawned as he spectated the fight lazily.

Finally, Jiese the Monk managed to disarm Lu Bingqi of his knife and palmed his right eye. A golden swastika appeared and sealed off the abilities of the right eye temporarily. He had been overcome.

"You are finally done..."

Fang Yuan stepped forward and examined the defeated Lu Bingqi.

"You are a trader from the Pawnshop, is that right? You have been sent to release the spirit?"

"You know about the Pawnshop?"

Lu Bingqi was stunned but he shut his mouth and refused to say another word.

"Would he die if he revealed information? Or does he simply not want to talk to us?"

Fang Yuan turned around to face Jiese the Monk.

"What should we do?"

"Amitufo! When such a situation arises, we monks would beat the information out of them!"

"Hmm, great suggestion! But I have a better idea!"

Fang Yuan stood in front of Lu Bingqi with an indifferent look on his face, which gave Lu Bingqi the chills.

"What are you going to do?"

"Nothing?"

Burn marks suddenly appeared on Fang Yuan's face and his eyes turned blood red.

"Wha..."

Jiese the Monk had a more agitated response.

Just as Fang Yuan released his inner demon, Jiese the Monk felt all his hairs stand on end and he retreated into the distance.

"Are you... even human?"

"Of course I am! Long story, but I can do what spirits do..."

Fang Yuan injected red rays of light into Lu Bingqi's pupils and

left him in a sluggish state while Fang Yuan riffled through his memories.

"You are really human?"

Jiese the Monk found it hard to believe. To him, Fang Yuan had become a terrifying spirit. He was spooked beyond measure.

"He has the abilities of spirits...did he seal a spirit on his own body?"

He was truly the successor to the Golden Mountain Monastery and had quickly come to an accurate conclusion.

"Buddha used to say, 'If not me, then who?'. This young master has made a great sacrifice and is an inspiration to our generation!"

Admiration aside, Jiese the Monk would never do that.

He knew that if he sealed a spirit on his own body, he would most definitely die! The best case scenario would be a possession by an evil spirit, and he would live out his days like his master, in a demonic trance!"

"Lu Xia's uncle? Interesting!"

Evil spirits could force mortal memories to reveal themselves. Fang Yuan learnt everything about Lu Bingqi after a short time.

"You were forced to release the spirit, and intended to take revenge for your nephew as well? Hmm?"

Although Lu Bingqi's memories were laid bare for Fang Yuan to see, Fang Yuan also realised that there were many gaps.

"The memories of the Pawnshop were blanked out! No...they were inaccessible to him! Indeed, there were mantras that were capable of countering the abilities of evil spirits..."

Fang Yuan ceased using his divine technique and Lu Bingqi slowly regained his senses. He immediately felt a sharp iciness in his heart.

"What...what did you do to me?"

"Don't be upset. We're all professional exorcists and are here to help you out."

Fang Yuan smiled and went on.

"Do you not want to escape the control of the Pawnshop?"

"You all want to deal with the Pawnshop?"

Lu Bingqi shook his head.

"That's impossible! No one can destroy the Pawnshop. You have no idea about our desolation... even the spirits of the lowest level cannot be defeated. This is the truth!"

"Seems like you're well aware of your situation. However, I am an exception... Just a heads up. The evil spirit that killed your nephew Lu Xia was sealed up by yours truly."

"What?"

Lu Bingqi was more distressed than Fang Yuan expected. He went slack-jawed.

"What did you say?"

Fang Yuan continue blandly.

"I know you are confused, but I can tell you the whole story!"

When Fang Yuan was done explaining everything, Lu Bingqi was devastated.

"So... this is the truth? My god, I would have found out about the truth if I only waited a little longer. But I had to make a deal with the Pawnshop... Haha... I must be the dumbest person who has ever lived!"

"What kind of deal? Explain!"

Fang Yuan's interest was piqued.

"Your explanation ties in with my investigations. I believe you.

Since you have avenged my nephew, let me give you a caveat. The Pawnshop is worldly and has vast resources. You cannot hope to challenge them. Forget your plan and move on with your life!"

"Don't worry, I don't do things that I don't have confidence in!"

Fang Yuan kept smiling.

"Anyway, tell me everything you know about the Pawnshop, if there is nothing stopping you from doing so..."

"Alright, if you insist!"

Lu Bingqi began to share all that he knew, with Fang Yuan and Jiese the Monk listening intently beside him. As Lu Bingqi spoke on, their faces, Jiese's especially, slowly morphed into stunned ones.

"This is ridiculous. Such a thing actually exists in this world? So you're saying that my Master was entranced by it?"

Chapter 518: An Idea

"This means that if you do not unseal the ghost and fulfil the criteria of staying with it for one night, you will still die. This is the contents of the contract! It will not change because you have received the truth in advance!"

After hearing Lu Bingqi's description, Fang Yuan sighed. "Interesting... A pawnshop which secretly harvests the souls of humans and spreads curses around?"

"None of this is interesting, okay?"

Lu Bingqi rolled his eyes. "As soon as the pawnshop knows that I cannot pay the price, they will immediately confiscate the soul which I have pawned to them!"

"Alright, alright, it's just a ghost, right?"

Fang Yuan causally threw the piece of Enmity Blood Jade into the array.

"What are you doing?"

Jiese the monk was shocked. With that, the three of them witnessed the blood streaks flowing out from the jade, staining the entire floor of the room a blood-red hue.

"Bloop! Bloop!"

The blood was being absorbed by the floor as though the entire room had come to live.

Fang Yuan had a much easier time in initiating the array as compared to Lu Bingqi. In an instant, a sinister vibe filled the atmosphere.

"Oh, Buddha... what have you done?"

Jiese the Monk looked at Fang Yuan and was devastated.

"Since he will die if he cannot complete the task, let's try

completing the task for him!"

Fang Yuan shrugged his shoulders. To him, it would cost him almost no effort to seal the ghost back.

"Even if you want to unseal the ghost, you have to let me be prepared!"

Even Lu Bingqi had given up all hope. At least unseal my eye first... That ghost will surely target me first!"

"There's no need for that!"

Fang Yuan raised his fist and smashed into mid-air.

"Bang!"

A female ghost in white appeared. As soon as she saw Fang Yuan, she shrieked, turned around and fled... fled...

"Amitufo, oh Lord Buddha... what have you done to the female ghost?"

Jiese the Monk mumbled to himself.

"Whoosh!"

Beside him, Fang Yuan had already turned into an illusionary shadow. In an instant, he appeared above the female ghost. Like a sun, he radiated heat and light and his shocking aura stunned the ghost. Quickly, he transformed into the shape of a giant eagle.

"Heavenly Eagle Claw!"

"Bang!"

As the claw struck down, the female ghost disintegrated into powder.

The sinister vibes which once filled the room quickly dissipated and was long gone.

"Mmm? What did you guys say? I didn't hear it too clearly..."

Fang Yuan turned around and looked at the both of them.

"No... Nothing much!"

Lu Bingqi and Jiese the Monk were both utterly confused. Was that the terrorizing ghost which had toyed with them and forced them into desolation?

Why did she seem like a piece of flimsy paper in front of Fang Yuan?

"Amituofu... This is a miracle! This is the first time I have seen the power of an [Arhat](#) in a human!"

Jiese paid his greetings to Fang Yuan and treated him like a living Arhat.

"You are able to use martial arts to destroy a ghost? I'm afraid that even the number one martial artist in the world is unable to do that, right?"

Lu Bingqi's eyes were wide open. "I now trust in your abilities. I hope that... you are able to seal that Hell up!"

"This of course... We still have an entire night. You can repeat everything that you have said just now, but don't miss out on a single detail!"

Fang Yuan forcefully stomped on the ground, creating a hole in the floorboards. A white shadow seemed to have disintegrated once more.

"If you are smart, leave us alone. Otherwise, I will destroy you!"

The female ghost in white was destroyed by Fang Yuan too many times and could not restore its form in such a short time. Therefore, it was temporarily forced into hibernation.

Indeed, she had obediently left them alone and no longer pestered them.

"Take a look... Isn't she reasonable?"

Fang Yuan dusted his hands, crossed his legs and sat down while looking at the both of them.

'Compared to that female ghost, you're more like the ghost!'

Jiese the Monk and Lu Bingqi were speechless. Slowly, they accepted reality and their speechlessness turned into relieve and happiness.

"Who would've thought that we will have such a powerful person among us humans that is able to counter ghosts with pure martial arts! This is unbelievable!"

Jiese the Monk mumbled under his breath.

"This is because of my unique physical stats!"

Fang Yuan shook his head. For a normal person, having 2 to 3 times the stats of the average human would already be impressive enough.

Such physical properties were still too weak against ghosts and curses. Therefore, most humans had already lost all hope in resisting.

However, it was different for Fang Yuan. Although Fang Yuan's stats were disrupted on his arrival, he was still able to break through the limit of the average human in this realm. Together with his Spirit Sealing Body complementing his combat power, Fang Yuan's physical condition was 10 times the normal human and his strength was overbearing. Even if he were to be severely injured, he would not die and instead, he would be able to recover in no time.

Such survivability and combat power would make Fang Yuan like a monster! He could be the only one powerful enough to deal with ghosts!

'Even if anyone were to become as strong as me through their martial arts, they will at most be able to destroy Spirit Level ghosts. Before a Murderous Level ghost, they will barely ensure their own survival. Against a Strange Level ghost, they have almost no chance of winning! No! They have zero chances of

winning! They will be poor souls being toyed by these Strange Level ghosts... however, if they were to have the exorcism techniques and concoctions from the Tantai Family, they might just have a slim chance of survival!'

Fang Yuan knew his own limits and did not dare to be reckless before a curse which was at the Strange Level.

The only thing he could rely on now was his Spirit Sealing Body.

He was not confident of entirely sealing up the Paranormal Pawnshop.

After all, he had to find the source of the curse before he could entirely seal up the Strange Level curse. It would be useless to seal its split entities or other low-levelled curses.

"Since the physical form of the Paranormal Pawnshop is in the alternate dimension, can you bring us there?"

It was nightfall and a bonfire was lit in the middle of the Chen Residences. A fragrant and plump chicken was roasted over the fire. Jiese the Monk was salivating as he smeared seasoning all over the chicken. He was incredibly skilled at it and it seemed like he had secretly drunk alcohol and ate meat before.

'Jiese, oh Jiese. It seems like other than lust, this monk is after everything else...'

Seeing this, Fang Yuan rolled his eyes. Although he knew that this was not what Jiese's name meant, he could not help but think that way.

Slowly, he shifted his attention to Lu Bingqi.

"This... Even we the 'traders' can only enter the pawnshop after smearing our blood on a name card after surviving our encounter with the life-threatening evil ghost. Only then will we be able to engage in a trade... Normally, we will not be able to enter the place."

Lu Bingqi scratched his head. "Right... To think about it, I had already received the name card of this pawnshop before the accident happened. I had casually placed it in my wallet. Could this be a reason why I was chosen to enter the pawnshop?!"

He smiled sheepishly.

Obviously, if he knew the truth behind the pawnshop and how scary the pawnshop really was, he might not have made the same decision as he did previously.

"Namecard? Let me take a look!"

Fang Yuan glanced down and took a black name card from Lu Bingqi.

There was a dim glow to the name card and the words were in gold. It had a luxurious appearance.

"What's written on it?"

Jiese the Monk took the name card from Fang Yuan and was filled with curiosity. However, he realised that could not read the words as well.

"Paranormal Pawnshop!"

Lu Bingqi spoke in a soft voice. "I've looked for normal humans and even exorcists to try reading the name card only to realise that only us traders are able to see the words on the card clearly!"

"Hmm, it seems like there is a layer of protection being cast on it..."

A gold hue flashed in Fang Yuan's eyes as he suddenly gazed towards Lu Bingqi. "Hmmmmmm... We cannot remain passive. We need to actively seek them out."

"Actively seek them out? What do you mean?"

Lu Bingqi suddenly felt a chill down his spine as he could sense hostility from Fang Yuan's glare.

"Although we have unsealed the ghost, you still need to spend the night in the Chen Residences, right?"

Fang Yuan smiled and looked at Lu Bingqi. "As soon as you leave the premises of the Chen Residences, the pawnshop will interfere and confiscate what you have mortgaged, right?"

"Yes... that's right..."

Lu Bingqi sounded hoarse.

He had mortgaged his soul! If the pawnshop were to confiscate it, he would die on the spot.

"Are you still intending to struggle in this Hell all for that slim chance of hope?"

Fang Yuan's voice was tempting. "The rumour that you might redeem your soul might just be a hoax... You can test it out! In the real world, I have confidence that I am still able to retain your soul even if the pawnshop were to attempt to confiscate it."

"Keke... forget it!"

Lu Bingqi forced a smile.

Compared to Fang Yuan who he knew nothing about, he would prefer to trust the pawnshop more. At least, the pawnshop would honour their promises.

"Jiese, what do you think?"

Fang Yuan looked towards the monk by his side.

"Amitufo..."

Jiese had already gobbled down an entire drumstick and was wiping the oil from his mouth before showing a straight face. "Since Mister Lu is already on the path of evil, if he continues to live, he will continue to engage in trades with the pawnshop and in the process release ghosts and curses to cause harm for the world. Considering the outcome, I cannot let all of these happen!"

"F*ck! I knew that you are not a good monk from the beginning!"

Lu Bingqi spoke with anger.

His life was on the line. Of course he wanted to retaliate! However, after seeing Fang Yuan's abilities from the previous fight, he knew that he did not have much of a choice.

With that, he rolled his eyes in disgust. "What do you guys intend to do? Tell me!"

"It's simple. Break the deal, make the pawnshop interfere and from there, we shall test its abilities..."

Fang Yuan looked around. "This place is very suitable... Of course, I will have to make some preparations. Monk, if you have any secret moves, use them now. I'm afraid you won't have a chance later."

"Amitufo, that is what I am thinking as well!"

After a full meal, Jiese the Monk restored his calm and revered look. "It will be a good deed if we are able to settle this 'Hell' once and for all!"

Theravada Buddhism defines Arhat as one who has gained insight into the true nature of existence and has achieved nirvana.

Chapter 519: Punishment

Lu Bingqi found himself in an awkward position.

From the beginning, he thought that Fang Yuan was his saviour.

Now, he was clear that Fang Yuan was only treating him as a test subject!

The most frustrating thing was that he was too weak to resist anything because he couldn't even win a fight with Jiese the Monk!

"Unsealing the ghost is only half of the task. The other half will require you to spend a night in the Chen Residences..."

Fang Yuan dragged the regretful Lu Bingqi towards the entrance of the residences. "Monk, what's up?"

"Amitufo... I've already tried my best. However, we cannot be sure if the Buddha Array has any effect on the pawnshop..."

Jiese the Monk spoke truthfully.

"Wait up monk, isn't there a Buddhist saying that saving a single life is more meritorious as compared to becoming Buddha? How can you do this to me?"

Lu Bingqi screamed in desperation.

"If killing one will allow me to save 10,000 others, even if I go to hell, I will do it!"

Jiese the Monk retorted firmly.

"You d*mned monk!"

Lu Bingqi was already restless and could not resist as Fang Yuan dragged him out of the residences.

"It's over... I'm dead!"

He mumbled to himself and shivered in fear as he recalled the outcomes of those who had gone back on their agreements.

The real torture was not death itself, but the inability to die peacefully!

In the Paranormal Pawnshop, there was a row of brains decorating the corridors which would send chills down the spine of whoever looked at it. Those were... the traders who had gone back on their words!

Lu Bingqi knew that these traders were still alive and had been forced to stay alive for more than a hundred years.

Their consciousnesses were locked up in a small dark room. Anything with wisdom would go crazy after a prolonged period in the room.

This was intentional. The pawnshop had kept these brains alive to deter the rest from trying anything funny!

Because of this, there were extremely few traders who dared to go against the pawnshop.

But now, Lu Bingqi was being forced to do so.

In the eyes of the pawnshop, there would be the same consequences regardless if one was forced or not!

"It... It has come!"

As soon as Lu Bingqi was being pulled out of the Chen Residences, he could feel a bad omen approaching as he wailed in despair.

"Don't worry! Of course, I know it's coming!"

Fang Yuan smiled and walked towards Lu Bingqi. Suddenly, with outstretched fingers, he poked them into Lu Bingqi's eye sockets.

"Ahhh!"

Lu Bingqi's right eye was being dug out and blood dripped everywhere as he screamed in pain.

"I admire the lot of you who are daring enough to trade with the

pawnshop in exchange for these strengthened abilities which are being tampered with... Although this Ghost Eye will allow you to see ghosts and give you strengthened abilities, if activated, they will explode inside you!"

Fang Yuan scoffed as he examined the Ghost Eye in his hands.

At that moment, the reflection of a soul appeared as it flew about in the eyeball.

"Hmph, boring!"

With a forceful clench of his fist, the entire eyeball exploded and even the powerful ghost within it disappeared in an instant.

"Ah..."

The one-eyed Lu Bingqi was rolling on the ground and wailed in pain. Suddenly, he held his head with both his hands. "It's useless... When I signed the contract, they had already imprinted the mortgage seal on my soul! Now, it will be able to harvest my soul according to the contract..."

"Amitufo, you don't have to worry about this!"

Jiese the Monk remained serious. "I have cast the Buddha Array so that your soul will be contained within you... Furthermore, even if your soul were to be pulled out of you, you don't have to worry. Master Fang will pull your soul back."

Lu Bingqi could slowly feel his soul being tugged out of his body. However, it only lasted for a few moments before another force pulled his soul back. The two forces pushed and pulled, leaving Lu Bingqi crawling on the ground like an exhausted dog.

"Of course, our actions are likely to infuriate the pawnshop, making it retaliate."

Fang Yuan nodded his head and examined the surroundings.

A thick layer of black fog appeared and shrouded them.

Amidst the green ghostly fire around, silhouettes appeared.

These silhouettes turned into expressionless ghosts which began to flood towards them.

"Since the curse and restrictions within Lu Bingqi are being lifted, they are now attacking from the outside?"

Fang Yuan stood behind Lu Bingqi. His eyes turned golden as he swept his surroundings.

Evidently, the pawnshop's only target was Lu Bingqi.

If it were to recklessly pull Lu Bingqi out, it would have to enter this alternate dimension, cutting itself off from its own source of curse energy!

"Buddhas in 4 Directions, strengthen the fire! Om Mani Padme Hum! Om Mani Padme Hum!"

Seeing the approaching swarm of ghosts, Jiese the Monk quickly strengthened the array. A golden pagoda slowly appeared and golden flames were burning on the sides of the pagoda.

The swarm of ghosts arrived outside and remained emotionless but they remained outside and could not advance further.

"Ha... Never would I have thought that the first time I will execute this array after leaving the mountains will be against so many wronged souls..."

Jiese the Monk took in a cold breath. "Master Fang, don't worry. I am still able to hold up!"

"Is that so?"

Fang Yuan pointed in a certain direction.

A humongous female ghost appeared. Her size was almost as huge as the entire Chen Residences. With an opened mouth, she attempted to swallow the entire golden array. From her wide-opened mouth, countless ghosts floated out.

"Rumble!"

In an instant, the entire Buddha Array started to dim and cracks appeared on the ground beneath them.

Jiese the Monk shook a little and spat out a mouthful of blood.

"Sigh. At the end of everything, you are still too weak and you need me to help you!"

Fang Yuan sighed before releasing the first ghost which he had sealed.

"Whooooo!"

A chilly breeze blew across them.

The swarm of ghosts seemed to be shocked at something as they retreated.

Even though this sealed ghost had dropped in its Level, it had still originated from a Strange Level curse! These common Spirit Level ghosts would surely be no match for it and therefore, they started to retreat.

The humongous female ghost was relentless in her attacks. Sticking out her tongue, she started licking the array.

Upon a closer look, they realised that this 'tongue' was formed from countless human heads with bleeding eyes.

"It's another 'Murderous' Level ghost!"

Burnt marks started to appear on Fang Yuan's face. He had activated the ability of the second Murderous ghost and flames erupted everywhere before overwhelming the female ghost.

"This..."

Jiese the Monk looked at Fang Yuan in shock. "How many ghostly souls have you sealed in your body?"

"Not many, just two!"

Fang Yuan remained calm and composed. "Although I had pushed that ghost into the alternate dimension, I cannot hold her

there for long. She will be back soon."

There was no way Jiese the Monk could deal with the Murderous Grade ghost. Fang Yuan had to deal with her himself!

"Look after Lu Bingqi!"

The scorched marks on Fang Yuan became increasingly obvious as it slowly covered over his original icy appearance.

At this moment, a huge ghostly hand appeared in mid-air and crushed downwards.

"Rumble!"

The entire Buddha Array shattered in that instant and disintegrated into sparks.

"Great!"

Jiese the Monk took out a lace of Buddhist beads and wrapped them around Lu Bingqi before pulling him to safety.

"Do you think you are powerful just because you are big in size?"

Fang Yuan laughed as he shot towards the humongous female ghost.

"Bang!"

Like a bullet, Fang Yuan flew through the face of the female ghost. There were burn marks where he had flown through and her face started to disintegrate.

"You are a mere Murderous Level ghost and there is no value in sealing you."

Fang Yuan stood on the forehead of the female ghost and looked at her expressionless eyes.

"I hate your expression!"

As he mumbled under his breath, he struck his claw out and broke a test-tube of concoction before landing the claw in her eyes.

With Fang Yuan's abilities and the exorcism skills of the Tantai Family, he was able to inflict severe damage to the Murderous Level ghost.

In that instant, the female ghost's body started to warp and the faces on her tongue started to shriek in unison.

"Heavenly Eagle... Slice!"

Focusing his energy, Fang Yuan gripped his right hand tightly and a 10-metre-long energy sword appeared in his hands. With it, he sliced towards the female ghost.

"Shiiingg!"

The sword was quick.

The female ghost was stunned. Slowly, her forehead started to break apart and her body became increasingly dim.

"Amitufo... With the sword, you will be able to exterminate all sorts of ghosts!"

Jiese the Monk was captivated at this scene and momentarily forgot that he was running away from the ghosts.

"This is impossible!"

Even Lu Bingqi could not believe his eyes.

Even an experienced trader would not be able to survive if encountered with such a humongous female ghost!

But what about this person before him?

In a single slice, the most fearsome ghost which he had ever laid his eyes on disintegrated without a fight!

How was this possible?

These were the powerful ghosts which had forced him into desperation!

At this moment, there was a turn of events!

"Whoosh!"

There was a quick flash and Lu Bingqi disappeared into thin air.

"How is this possible?"

Jiesi the Monk leapt towards Lu Bingqi, but all he caught was the lace of Buddhist beads.

"Whoosh!"

The lace broke and the Buddhist beads rolled on the ground, the sound resembling a mocking laughter.

"Has Lu Bingqi been... pulled to the Paranormal Pawnshop?!"

Fang Yuan walked over and seemed to be deep in his thoughts as he witnessed everything.

"That's right... It's my fault that I've caused his death!"

Jiese the Monk had a look of defeat on his face.

In the surroundings, the swarm of ghosts and even the humongous female ghost were all gone.

They were all here for Lu Bingqi. Now that he had been successfully pulled into the pawnshop, they would naturally disappear as though all that had happened was just an illusion.

"Whatever!"

Fang Yuan had a sneaky look on his face. "... Who said that we've lost?"

...

"Bang!"

Lu Bingqi fell onto the ground embarrassedly.

The building of the Paranormal Pawnshop stood before him.

The row of brains seemed to be focusing on him, hinting at him the possibility of experiencing mental torture.

"No... I did not go against the agreement on purpose..."

Lu Bingqi was desperate and fearful. "Let me off! Let me off this time!"

Chapter 520: Killing Through the Pawnshop

"Ring! Ring!"

Silhouettes of all sorts of shapes appeared around Lu Bingqi but all of them were motionless.

He held his breath as he waited for the human form of the pawnshop to appear.

One minute had passed, two minutes had passed... The expected punishment never came. Instead, the space around him shook as though it was chasing him away,

"What's happening? Had the pawnshop given up on punishing me?"

Lu Bingqi was in shock.

"Have you realised it? It is easy for you to get me here, but it's going to be hard if you want to chase me away! Since I'm here now, it is not going to be easy to get rid of me!"

A loud voice was heard coming from Lu Bingqi.

"Are you... Mister Fang Yuan?!"

Lu Bingqi was at lost. He knew that if Fang Yuan were to help him, he could still survive this ordeal.

However, there was something even more shocking.

His right eye was previously dug out. In his eye socket, blood started to gush out and a black silhouette emerged from it. It was a ghost!

"Is this the Paranormal Pawnshop?"

The ghost was scanning the building as Fang Yuan's voice came out from it. "It is indeed hidden very well... Even my physical body is unable to detect this place!"

Fang Yuan was merely a split entity!

After sealing a ghost, he would be able to use its abilities.

The previous Murderous Level ghost which Fang Yuan had just sealed had the abilities to alter memories, create split entities of itself and pull others into an alternate dimension.

Before they had arrived at the Paranormal Pawnshop, Fang Yuan had secretly created a split entity of himself and entered Lu Bingqi's body while he dealt the humongous female ghost by himself, therefore, putting the bait out.

The Paranormal Pawnshop was indeed inflexible enough to have pulled Lu Bingqi straight into its own dimension to punish him.

"Ring! Ring!"

After realising that they were not able to chase Fang Yuan away, alarms started to shrill in the entire pawnshop. Instruments of torture flew in mid-air towards Fang Yuan.

These instruments of torture were all cast with powerful curses which would allow them to deal with both humans and ghosts.

A mere split entity at the Spirit Level could do little in the pawnshop against the powerful ghosts here. In an instant, Fang Yuan was forced to the corner.

However, Fang Yuan left the split entity in Lu Bingqi not just to see the pawnshop. More importantly, it was to locate it.

Although this was his last resort, he was still not desperate enough to go to such lengths.

"It's important to know that... the split entity of a Murderous Level ghost is only at the Spirit Level. However, this split entity is able to appear at will and always has the upper hand. This is because these split entities have a delicate connection to the actual body itself. It is even able to swap locations with the actual body in an instant!"

"Buzz!"

In the next moment, the original black ghost had disappeared and was replaced by Fang Yuan's actual self!

In the outside world, Jiese the Monk was utterly shocked at Fang Yuan turning into a ghost. However, Fang Yuan who was now in the pawnshop started to examine his surroundings in detail before nodding his head. "This place is indeed an alternate dimension! I can sense that... the source is here!"

This was the source of a Strange Level paranormal presence! It was significant!

In an instant, Fang Yuan turned into the most powerful form he could turn into. The abilities of two powerful ghosts stacked against each other and even his hands were partially ice and fire.

"Kacha!"

In the blink of an eye, the brutal instruments of torture were hit to the ground and turned into a pile of bent metal.

At the same time, Fang Yuan could feel a huge pressure growing on him.

It was the collective power of the paranormal presence here!

The Strange Level curse had an area-wide effect which would last for thousands of years. It would mean a desolate world if placed upon the outside realm!

How scary would it be for such a curse to explode to its full potential in this alternate dimension?

At least Fang Yuan knew that if he did not release the abilities of the ghosts in him, his normal human body would not be able to withstand the curse for even a moment. He would have died in an instant!

"The compressing void, the control of information, the vengeful curses... everything is collectively targeted at me now."

The purple and black streaks on Fang Yuan's body formed a

unique pattern which started to expand all over his body.

It was never a safe thing to release ghosts in the first place!

If Fang Yuan previously only released 30% of the ghost's abilities, now would be roughly 50%! It was close to the limit!

If he really crossed the limit, there would only be two consequences.

He could either force both ghosts out entirely and hope that they would go head-on with the Paranormal Pawnshop, resulting in both parties getting destroyed each other leaving Fang Yuan alive to seal both of them back afterwards.

Another option would be to allow the ghosts to completely take over his body to transform himself into a true evil ghost! There would be no turning back!

Of course, considering Fang Yuan's physical conditions, the limit in which he could release the ghost was relatively high!

If he was a normal exorcist, he would already be close to his limit at 50%.

"My physical condition exceeds the limitation the realm imposes on humans. Together with my True Spirit and strong willpower, I am not afraid of being overwhelmed by the ghosts. Therefore, for me, the limit of releasing the ghosts is 99%!"

Fang Yuan quickly estimated his own limit by leveraging on his experience as a True Divine. With this, he was able to have so much confidence and delicate control.

Against the pressure from the entire Paranormal Pawnshop, Fang Yuan had already released the ghosts' abilities to 60%!

"In fact... This is a competition to see who is better at controlling their abilities... This is a true fight among ghosts of the Strange Level, which involved the limits of control!"

Fang Yuan's face became increasingly ferocious and one of his

eyes had already turned red. Together with his other gold eye, he looked extremely evil.

"However... My opponent is ultimately a curse of the Strange Level... These two things which I have sealed might not be able to hold up for long!"

A curse at the Strange Level was entirely more powerful than ghosts at the Murderous Level!

Fang Yuan could only last so long because of his heightened physical conditions and the fact that the Paranormal Pawnshop was too inflexible in dealing with threats.

Even so, without a strong foundation to resist the increasing pressure, Fang Yuan felt that his resistance was meaningless.

"The only solution is to release the ghosts up to my limit. With that, I will be able to severely injure the curse of the pawnshop and quickly locate its source to seal it!"

Fang Yuan's eyes glistened with excitement. "Release!"

"Rumble!"

Unknowingly, Lu Bingqi who was watching the fight the whole time started to shiver even more violently.

All he could see was two unknown evils appeared behind Fang Yuan, revealing their illusionary silhouettes.

One of them was a charred corpse with bloodshot eyes.

The other one was greenish-purple and gave off chilly vibes. A light blue glow was continuously pulsating from it!

"Eh? Something's not right..."

The chilly vibes suddenly disappeared and Fang Yuan shuddered. "It's the ghost at the beginning! It has regained all of its Strange Level abilities!"

The first ghost which he had sealed was created a curse created

by the collective effort of the Tantai Family. It was initially at the level of 'Strange' but was injured by the 'Door', sustaining an injury which lasted more than 10 years.

However, in recent years, due to the fact that Fang Yuan had released it partially multiple times or the fact that it might be triggered by the pawnshop, it had restored its partial ability!

"Strange Level curses have their own quirks but all of them are troublesome. However, I am fortunate. The curse of the pawnshop seems to be more of the preparatory type. If given time to prepare, it will be able to create ghost swarms and humongous ghosts which will then pose problems for me. However, my surprise invasion this time will allow me to kill my way to its source!"

Fang Yuan focused and a streak of ice appeared before him which stretched into the sky.

"Warping space? I know that too!"

A tunnel was opened, revealing the other buildings within the pawnshop

"Pa!"

Fang Yuan stomped his feet on the ground. Like a cannonball, the wall in front crumbled, revealing the depths of the pawnshop.

Lu Bingqi was utterly stunned and dumbfounded.

"Ferocious! A ferocious being of the world! How could he forcefully tear down the pawnshop..."

Lu Bingqi's mouth was wide open but secretly, he was happy.

If Fang Yuan succeeded, would he have a better chance of survival?

"Wuuuu..."

A sense of fear suddenly filled his heart and a green glow started to form words before him:

"Emergency trade announcement!"

"Kill the invader and gain the rights to redeem your soul! This trade is open to all!"

...

All around the world, traders of the Paranormal Pawnshop twitched their eyebrows. Some of them were jubilant while others were deep in thought.

"It's panicking!"

As a trader, Lu Bingqi knew what was happening now. "The pawnshop is panicking! This means that Mister Fang Yuan really has the ability to destroy the pawnshop!"

At the same time, numerous traders started to appear before Fang Yuan. Some of them avoided him as soon as they arrived while others had a ferocious smile on their faces. "After killing you, I will be free!"

"Idiots!"

Without paying too much attention to them, Fang Yuan effortlessly wiped out all forms of resistance, turning them into a pile of bloodied mess.

"A single trade is enough for me to redeem my soul?"

In a flash, a pair of westerners appeared on the corridors of the pawnshop.

The female had skin as white as milk and she seemed focused. "If I use my black magic, I might succeed!"

"No, I wouldn't recommend you to do so!"

The big burly westerner pulled her to a corner.

"Thomas, why are you getting in my way?"

"I don't want to see you die for nothing! You must know that... this person is the enemy of the pawnshop!"

Thomas swallowed his saliva. "You know that I have the blood of a psychic. My predictions are always spot on. Be careful, he's here!"

In the blink of an eye, the female witch noticed a reckless silhouette coming towards them.

Before Fang Yuan, another black magician appeared. The black magician quickly chanted a mantra and a black hexagram array formed a protection around the black magician.

"It's President of Darkness's curse! Eh..."

As soon as the female witch became excited, the easterner waved his hands as though he was swatting a fly. In an instant, the protective curse was disabled and the president was being flung towards the wall, turning into a pile of blood and flesh. She did not even have the time or opportunity to retaliate.

"Thomas... You're right. This person is not someone we can afford to anger..."

Chapter 521: The Beginning of an End

In reality, the Paranormal Pawnshop was not weak at all!

Its defences were even stronger inside the pawnshop.

Fang Yuan was constantly under the increasing pressure from the curse of the pawnshop!

If not for the fact that he had already released both ghosts in his body and was resisting the pawnshop's curse with his 'Strange' Level Frosted Ghost, he would've died long ago.

Even if he could survive, he would be tossed out of the dimension, or his memories would be altered, or his soul would be harvested.

But now, Fang Yuan was as courageous as he ever was. He was against the pawnshop's curse head-on and the traders which the pawnshop had strengthened were no match against Fang Yuan!

"I've found it!"

Suddenly, his gold and red eyes glared at a particular wall. Both his hands started to turn light-blue. "Open... up!"

The pawnshop would surely hide its source in the depths of the alternate dimension. It would be futile to use physical brute force to destroy the wall.

The only thing which could stand a chance against a Strange Level curse would be another Strang Level ghost!

Therefore, Fang Yuan unreservedly used the abilities of his ghost to lock on to the deeper dimension behind the wall!

"Kacha! Kacha!"

The wall turned into ice and the dimension behind it froze as well and could no longer move.

"Bang!"

With that, Fang Yuan struck a simple punch out and a huge hole was indented into the wall.

Behind the hole, there was a larger room.

This hall would never have been visible in the pawnshop's actual building. This was where its real source laid, hidden in the depths of the alternate dimension.

But now, it was being infiltrated by Fang Yuan!

The dark hall was huge and there were black statues which decorated the room. Most of them were ferocious-looking beasts, but some of them resembled fallen angels.

In the middle of all the statues, there was a black-coloured stone platform which seemed to be entirely made out of obsidian. On the platform, there was a scroll of parchment!

"The source of the curse!"

Fang Yuan's eyes glistened. Quickly, he transformed into a shadow and leapt towards the parchment.

"Creaaaak!"

In that instant, the eyes of the statues lit up and looked towards Fang Yuan.

In the surroundings, swarms of ghosts appeared. It was like an army of ghosts which guarded the obsidian fiercely.

"Get lost!"

As he roared, his hands turned into ice and fire. With a casual flick, the wronged souls disappeared.

"Bang!"

A black statue pounced forward. It was a three-headed bat which was emitting a screeching vibration.

"Die!"

With a casual grip, the chilly claws destroyed the heads of the

statue effortlessly. Blood gushed out of the statue as though it was a real living thing.

"These statues..... Every single one of them seems like a Murderous Level ghost and a curse in itself!"

Fang Yuan's eyes glistened. As soon as the blood touched Fang Yuan, it evaporated instantly.

There were at least a hundred of these stone statue ghosts in the room! Together with the Strange Level curse on the parchment, Fang Yuan would really be troubled if all of these paranormal beings were to attack him at once!

Even with the Spirit Sealing Body, Fang Yuan had a limit and could not seal so many ghosts at once!

"Get lost!"

Fang Yuan clenched his teeth and the dark purple hue started to spread on his body. With that, he released the ghosts in him to his limit.

"Keke!"

The powerful force of a curse started to spread from Fang Yuan's body. It was a curse of the Strange Level and the swarm of ghosts were easily chased away. Even the statue ghosts of the Murderous Level did not dare to advance any further.

The entire room quietened down. Only the parchment on the obsidian platform was still emitting its evil glow.

"I see... Only a curse of the Strange Level will be able to resist it!"

As Fang Yuan rushed towards the platform, he realised that a new statue was rising up, blocking his way to the platform.

It had the shape of a normal human being. It stretched its hands forward as though it was trying to grab the parchment. He was donned in an archaic attire and had a ponytail as well. His expression of fear and desperateness was extremely lifelike.

"Is this... the first trader who had signed the contract with the pawnshop?"

In an instant, Fang Yuan understood everything. "His agreement to the contract started the curse of the pawnshop. However, he did not have it easy as well. His soul was confiscated from him and his body was being used to spread the curse!"

At this point in time, cracks resembling spiderwebs started to spread on the statues, revealing a human's skin.

The 30-year-old man stood up. Although he had the same appearance as the statue and wore a black religious robe, he was expressionless and his eyes were completely black as though they had become black holes of the universe. His eyes began to absorb light from the surroundings as he stood in front of the obsidian platform.

"The human form of a Strange Level curse?!"

Fang Yuan licked his lips and swung his right hand forward. "Heavenly Eagle Claw!"

"Chirp! Chirp!"

A huge eagle appeared behind him and its feathers had a blue icy hue. It had an icy crown on its head as well as it swung its claws towards the man in black.

Against a strike which could severely injure a Murderous Level ghost, the man in black did not appear fearful. Instead, he merely raised both of his hands.

"Whooo!"

His black-hole-like eyes seemed to sparkle and in an instant, the giant eagle disappeared.

"Pa!"

As Fang Yuan's claws met with the palms before him, he could feel his hairs standing on its ends.

"This human form... is indestructible and will not die. Most importantly, its eyes have the ability to absorb spirits. If I am a normal human, just by looking at its eyes, my soul would've been harvested..."

"Whoosh!"

At this point in time, black chains shot out of the man like spider webs as they attempted to restrain Fang Yuan in the centre.

"Even I will die if I am being absorbed into him!"

Fang Yuan clenched his teeth. "Complete release!"

"Buzz!"

Everything froze for a moment.

If anyone was around, they would see a purple frozen corpse crawling out of Fang Yuan's body.

As soon as it appeared, the chains around it froze into ice.

This was an evil ghost at the Strange Level. Although it still had not restored its full abilities, it was already as powerful as the human form of the pawnshop!

"Shiing!"

It was as though the metal chains had realised something.

The purple corpse disappeared into thin air. Suddenly, it appeared above the man in black and pressed downwards.

"Bang!"

The human form which Fang Yuan had failed to injure the slightest bit was being forcefully pressed down and the two curses were engaged in a fierce fight.

"This is the best chance!"

Fang Yuan transformed into a charred Murderous Level ghost and flew towards the obsidian platform.

On his body, spirits started to appear and stretched their hands towards the parchment as well.

"Whoosh!"

One of the spirits arrived at the obsidian platform. However, a black streak of lightning struck down, disintegrating it.

The second spirit managed to retrieve the parchment but froze on the spot and disintegrated!

"This is the true source of the Strange Level curse... Even ghosts at the Spirit Level will be disintegrated as soon as they come into contact with it!"

A few test subjects had continuously failed. However, this made Fang Yuan even more confident. He leapt towards the obsidian platform and swung his hand out.

"Pa!"

The parchment was held in his hands.

"Seal!"

A swirl started to appear on his palm and the parchment was being absorbed into it.

"Ahhh!"

The pain of being forced into a spirit started to spread across Fang Yuan's body.

"Do I need to experience the power of the curse before I seal it?"

Fang Yuan clenched his teeth. If not for the fact that his physical conditions were at 15 points, he would have died under this curse and his Spirit Sealing Body would do nothing to help him survive!

He seemed to seemingly experience flashbacks as he went back in time to the beginning of the pawnshop.

.....

In an ancient-looking pawnshop.

A man in black was crying before a coffin and a tablet. It was his late wife, Lanxin.

"Why... why wouldn't the heavens let us be together..."

The man shouted as he questioned the heavens. There was no reaction from the heavens, but Hell responded.

The ground beneath him split and a huge black hand stretched out from the depths of hell. It pulled out a piece of parchment and presented it to the man.

"You want my soul and my everything? No problem!"

After the man read the terms, he started to laugh heartily. "As long as I can see my Lanxin... I will agree to any condition!"

In the next moment, the man had bit his thumb and signed the contract.

"Rumble!"

As soon as his blood landed on the parchment, the skies turned dark and thunder roared.

"Whiizzzz!"

The entire pawnshop was being pulled into an alternate dimension and the walls were being covered by a dark liquid. The pawnshop was undergoing an overhaul.

As the owner of the pawnshop, the man lost his vision and the curse started to flow into him. He became the human form which bore the power of the parchment and started to explore the world to harvest souls.

Fang Yuan knew that at the moment of agreeing to the contract, the curse had already confiscated this man's soul.

Hell had kept its promise to allow the man to be reunited with his wife. However, the reunion was in the depths of hell and the both of them were now dead!

...

"For a woman he loved, he recklessly released this harmful curse?"

In his right hand, the parchment was already entirely absorbed into the swirl and had disappeared.

At that instant, the man in black who was pressed towards the ground disintegrated into powder.

The source of the Strange Level curse and the Paranormal Pawnshop was finally sealed up!

In that instant, before Fang Yuan could take another breath, the frozen corpse had already arrived above him!

A completely released ghost would surely attempt to attack its owner!

This time, it was different!

Previously, Fang Yuan was up against a ghost which was severely injured by the Door, only comparable to a ghost at the Murderous Level.

This time, the frozen corpse had partially restored its Strange Level abilities!

"Kacha! Kacha!"

In an instant, Fang Yuan turned into a frozen statue. He could not even twitch his eyelid.

Outside, the entire Paranormal Pawnshop started to self-destruct and all the traders outside were in shock.

Chapter 522: Control

"Is the Paranormal Pawnshop...collapsing?"

The fortunate Lu Bingqi who did not die looked at the surrounding walls and ceiling. On their surfaces, numerous holes appeared and kept on expanding. It was as though they were pieces of paper being burned as they quickly turned into ashes.

The entire body of the pawnshop was rapidly turning into nothingness.

"Is the curse... gone?"

Similarly, Thomas and his female partner looked at the slowly disappearing pawnshop in awe. They could not help but weep tears of joy.

"Woong! Woong!"

At the next moment.

A ball of light appeared. The surviving traders were then kicked out of this alternate dimension as though they were intruders.

The entire plane of black fog collapsed from its edges and into its core.

Inside the dark hall.

An ice statue stood still and emanated a terrifying spiritual aura.

"Crackle!"

The cracks in space quickly extended like a monster's sharp claw as they came for where the statue stood.

Suddenly, large amounts of cracks appeared on the ice as it exploded violently, revealing Fang Yuan.

"What a close shave..."

As Fang Yuan looked at the cracks in the space around him swarming towards him, he let out a long breath and disappeared in

an instant.

Back in reality.

"Amitufo!"

Jiese the Monk placed his palms together.

"Fang Yuan, you are finally out! I heard from Lu Bingqi that you managed to break the curse of the pawnshop! What a magnanimous deed!"

"I was just lucky!"

Fang Yuan let out a long breath. What he said was true.

When he sealed the parchment scroll at the very last moment, it was extremely dangerous. Luckily, the ghost he sealed did not disappoint him after all.

However, after sealing the parchment scroll, Fang Yuan never expected to suffer from the backlash of that Strange Level frozen corpse.

Even though Fang Yuan managed to re-seal the ghost at the very last moment, the extreme sense of chilliness still froze and turn him into an ice statue.

Even with Fang Yuan's original stats, he might not even be able to survive from that extremely icy temperature.

'Luckily, after sealing the curse of the pawnshop, my body's physical property increased tremendously. Else, I'm afraid I would have been really trapped there... After all, that is the full power of a 'Strange' Level curse...'

With a lingering fear inside his heart, Fang Yuan then looked at his stats:

"Name: Fang Yuan (Tantai Mieming)

Essence: 25.0 (100)

Spirit: 25.0 (100)

Magic: 25.0 (100)

Profession: Exorcist

Technique: Exorcism (Peak), Pharmacy (Peak), Eagle Claw Grappling Technique (Peak)

Skill: \[Medicine (Level 3)\], \[Botany (Level 6)\], \[Fiery Golden Eyes (Level 1)\], \[Spirit Sealing Body (3rd Grade)\]

Spirit Sealing Body (3rd Grade): Your body is a weapon which is able to seal evil ghosts. You will be able to seal any ghost that you come into contact with into your body! You have activated the 3rd Grade, and the capacity for sealing evil ghosts: 3! You can choose to release the ghost!"

The pawnshop was indeed a Strange Level curse indeed! After sealing it, his stats increased greatly by 10 points!

Such an increase in stats definitely became harder and harder as time passed.

Furthermore, this was also due to the suppression by the higher-dimensional force on this realm.

Hence, this was why a Strange Level curse was so horrifying!

"If not for this little power, I would have most likely been frozen by the ghost's last resistance before it was sealed. I would then be sucked into the space-time turbulence and who knows what would happen next."

Fang Yuan clenched his fists tightly.

Currently, after Fang Yuan sealed his third evil ghost which was a Strange Level one, he felt his body was full of energy. He felt as though his condition was at its peak and could not be any better.

"From now on... Murderous Level evil ghosts would be nothing to me... By stacking and releasing two Strange Level curses, ghosts below Strange Level would definitely retreat. I wouldn't even be afraid of ghost swarms."

After Fang Yuan pondered, he opened his mouth and asked, "Two of you... why don't we return to the detective agency first?"

"I... I have to go too?"

Lu Bingqi was rather surprised and afraid. However, he did not dare to disobey what Fang Yuan said.

After all, this was the powerful person who destroyed the undefeatable pawnshop!

...

The three ravaged looking people entered the detective corporation. Ma Xiaoling was startled and took the first aid box to bandage Lu Bingqi.

After all, the wound on his eye had to be thoroughly dealt with.

As for Fang Yuan, he immediately went into the room and began to experiment with the abilities he received after sealing his third curse.

"Release!"

He first tried to release 10% of the curse and his entire body changed at once.

A black-coloured magnificent missionary-like robe automatically covered Fang Yuan's body. His skin turned pale and his eyes turned as black as the mysterious universe.

"This is... the might of a Strange Level curse at its prime?"

Fang Yuan's thought about it and black chains appeared on his hands. The chains coiled around his whole body closely and were hidden under his black robe. It was like some sort of secret weapon.

"After sealing the strange pawnshop, the abilities I obtained are largely classified into three areas. The first one is the most important one, the ability to propagate the curse!"

The pawnshop would make use of the traders to allow humans to release or create ghosts. In actual fact, this was the process of propagating the curse.

"Although it is unlikely that I can create Strange Level curses, I can produce as many Spirit Level and Murderous Level ghosts as I want! I can even control them!"

In other words, as long as Fang Yuan had the time, he could create a 'ghost swarm'.

"The second ability will be the ability to harvest souls. There are two methods for this ability, one is by forcefully harvesting souls while the more passive way is through contracts."

The source of this soul harvesting ability came from this pair of eyes that were like black holes in the universe.

"And the third ability is regarding the manipulation of information in a large area... Although this ability is listed the last, its effects are definitely unbelievably shocking!"

In simpler words, this so-called manipulation of information would be the alteration of collective memories in a large scope! It could potentially be a deadly killer weapon to human societies.

Furthermore, the manipulation of such Strange Level curse was not limited to such.

"Everything destroyed in reality can be restored by the curse. It can also be turned into an accident to make things appear logical and explicable!"

This was the reason why the phenomena caused by the Strange Level curses were never broadcasted by human media!

Even if it were to destruct a street in reality, it could repair the street back to what it was before in an instant. It could then alter all the witnesses' memories and then insert a bunch of false replacements such as images of gas pipeline explosions, a crossfire between villains et cetera. Anyway, it would hide all sorts of

paranormal activity under the guise of reasonable things.

"With this ability, my progress in searching for other strange beings would be greatly increased..."

Fang Yuan let out a long sigh.

In actual fact, after Fang Yuan obtained such an ability to manipulate information in such a large scope, the human society would no longer be any threat to him.

"They are all such practical abilities!"

Fang Yuan walked out of the room and saw Jiese the Monk silently chanting scriptures in the living room whereas Lu Bingqi was gone without a trace.

"That guest... said he wants to look for a doctor himself!"

Ma Xiaoling kept her first aid box and was rather indignant, "I even wanted to use those precious and expensive concoctions! He's not even appreciative at all!"

"He's gone?"

Fang Yuan furrowed his brows. This was unexpected but reasonable.

"Rest assured, he can't be too far off."

At that instant, a cold smile appeared on Fang Yuan's face.

The ability to control was not limited to controlling those ghosts!

As a trader of the pawnshop, how could his body not have any traces of the pawnshop left behind?

Now, Fang Yuan was the new Paranormal Pawnshop. Furthermore, he took over all the previous contracts and held the utmost authority over all these souls!

...

A few streets away.

Lu Bingqi escaped wretchedly and entered a dingy alley.

"That person... after he settled the pawnshop, he would definitely be exhausted and that's why he quickly secluded himself. If I don't run away now, when will I ever get the opportunity to run away again?"

Lu Bingqi placed his hand on the wall as he could not stop panting.

"As long as I run far away again, I will be totally carefree! Haha..."

Unfortunately, he could no longer see his family here.

Lu Bingqi clenched his teeth without caring about the immense pain from his right eye as he prepared to leave.

"Eh?"

Suddenly, as though a joke was being played, he suddenly felt a severe pain from his body. It was as though a knife was slicing around inside his body. He fell onto the ground and retched up a pool of fresh blood.

Also, this pool of blood had its own life as it curled about on the ground and formed bloody words.

After Lu Bingqi saw the words clearly, his face turned ashen at once. The words were, "Return to the detective corporation immediately, or else... death!"

"Impossible... when did he..."

Lu Bingqi was scared out of his wits but could only head back unwillingly.

In such a situation where his life was under someone else's hands, he could only obediently obey what Fang Yuan ordered him.

Not before long, Lu Bingqi reached the detective corporation. However, in his eyes, this detective corporation was even more

horrifying than any demon lair.

"Eh? You're back, Mr Lu?"

Ma Xiaoling was carrying a water basin and was rather surprised as she looked at the Lu Bingqi who returned, "Is your eye bandaged already?"

"Eh... not yet..."

Lu Bingqi was rather embarrassed. He then saw Fang Yuan who was sitting down and felt his legs go jelly at once, "Mr Fang... please spare me!"

"Are you very surprised that you are cursed?"

Fang Yuan shook his head as he continued, "In actual fact, this curse is not placed by me, it's the pawnshop's method of controlling.... Of course, the control has already been fully handed over to me."

Fang Yuan was totally qualified to say all these.

Moreover, even if Lu Bingqi were to commit suicide now, after death, his soul could only obediently follow Fang Yuan no matter what path it wanted to follow beforehand.

After all, Lu Bingqi already signed the contract from the start and betrayed his own soul!

"What? You don't believe?"

Fang Yuan looked at Lu Bingqi and smiled. Suddenly, Fang Yuan reached out his hand and grabbed Lu Bingqi's chest.

Lu Bingqi's face changed immediately but felt no pain in his chest at all. However, something even more important than his heart was already in Fang Yuan's hand.

"Bang!"

Lu Bingqi's vision turned black and he collapsed. Suddenly, his vision brightened up again and he saw himself on the ground!

"How's this? Can you get used to your soul's visual perspective?"

Fang Yuan's laughter could be heard.

Lu Bingqi finally realised that he had already become much more illusory-looking and was floating in mid-air. His soul was even coiled by a black chain and the other end was held tightly by Fang Yuan!

Chapter 523: Mr President

"Do you see it now? The chains on your spirit represent the restriction the pawnshop has on you!"

Fang Yuan did not hide the truth. "Since the day you signed the agreement with the pawnshop, your soul was no longer yours. It is now the property of the pawnshop! Of course, it is now my reward!"

"Sir! Let me go, Sir!"

Lu Bingqi in his spirit form cried out loud. If not for the fact that he did not have a body now, he would have probably peed in his pants out of fear.

"You should feel fortunate that I am a compassionate person. Therefore, I shall give you another chance!"

Fang Yuan waved his hands and the spirit returned to its body. In an instant, the black chains around the spirit disappeared.

Everyone knew that the chain was not gone, but merely in another dimension.

"Thank you, Sir! Thank you!"

Lu Bingqi started to kowtow desperately. Fang Yuan's actions had struck fear in him.

By toying around with his spirit, Fang Yuan was no different from the pawnshop.

And this was the truth.

Fang Yuan raised his right hands up. In an instant, he could detect thousands of traders spread out across the world, connected to him by the chain of the agreement.

'Their souls are now mine. I can harvest them anytime... Of course, this is not the most important. More importantly, they are a decent fighting force that I can make use of!'

After being strengthened by the pawnshop, these traders had the ability to exorcist ghosts as well. A minority of them even became elite exorcists!

With them as a considerable fighting force, Fang Yuan could go ahead with many of his own plans and save his own effort.

For instance, he could easily search for Strange Level ghosts and curses.

"Amitufo..."

Witnessing this scene, Jiese the Monk silently chanted his mantra and remained silent as his eyelid twitched.

After all, Fang Yuan was still an exorcist and therefore, they were still on the same side.

More importantly, he knew that even if he were to stand out, he could do nothing to stop Fang Yuan.

"Jiese the Monk!"

After dealing with Lu Bingqi, Fang Yuan turned around and looked at the monk.

"Do you have any instructions?"

Jiese the Monk remained composed. He was an exorcist and a smart one as well.

"I am interested in ghosts and curses. The stronger the better..."

Fang Yuan smiled. "Therefore... Can you contact the Exorcists Alliance on behalf of me and gather some information? I will deal with the troublesome ghosts for you. Of course, I will take some commision as well!"

"No problem!"

Jiese the Monk was all smiles. In his eyes, Fang Yuan was much more powerful than any living exorcist. He was the hope of humanity!

As long as he was willing to help fight against the ghosts which were troubling the Exorcists Alliance, Jiese the Monk would do anything for him.

"Know that I'm not interested in dealing with the petty ghosts..."

Fang Yuan pointed a finger out. "I only want to deal with the powerful ghosts and curses. Hmmm... Ghosts and curses as powerful as the pawnshop!"

"Ssss..."

Even though Jiese the Monk knew of Fang Yuan's weird hobby, he still shuddered in fear. "Yes... I understand."

"Very well, be dismissed, the both of you!"

Fang Yuan waved his hands and chased the both of them away before looking at the nervous Ma Xiaoling. "After finding out that I am such a person, do you fear me now?"

"Not at all..."

Ma Xiaoling shook her head. Ever since she had learnt exorcism from Fang Yuan, she already knew what kind of person Fang Yuan was. "The thing is... are you leaving?"

"You've guessed it?"

Fang Yuan smiled. "That's right... It's time I leave!"

It was fate that Fang Yuan could meet the father and daughter. He had saved them and dealt with the ghost on their behalf and in return, they had taken care of him for the past few years. It was fair.

However, humans had emotions and after living together for such a long period of time, they had developed a bond with one another.

After this, Fang Yuan would actively search for powerful ghosts and curses and his life would be filled with danger. Although he was not afraid, the people around surely would be.

"No... I want to be together with you!"

Ma Xiaoling bit on her lips.

"Girl, be good!"

Seeing as she was about to cry, Fang Yuan felt a little amused. He walked up to her and stroked her hair. "After this, I will explore the entire world and I don't even know where I'm about to go next!"

After a pause, he continued. "I shall hand the garden over to you. You have already learnt about the theory of mixing the concoctions. As long as you treat it seriously and learn it properly, you two will be safe!"

Fang Yuan had long extracted the essence of those mutated plants and turned them into concoctions. It was suitable to leave behind the most basic plants for Ma Xiaoling.

"When... when are you going to leave?"

After hearing how Fang Yuan had already prepared his final words, Ma Xiaoling knew that he had already made up his mind. With that, she felt disappointed.

"I'll wait for news. It might be soon."

Fang Yuan replied casually. Inside, he was worried about how much information regarding Strange Level ghosts and curses could the Exorcists Alliance possibly provide him.

...

In a village in the mountains.

"Whooooo..."

The silhouette of a lady whisked past quickly. "I've discovered that... the ghost is in the well! Anyone who drinks from this well will be cursed!"

She seemed to be in her twenties and was wearing tight clothing.

Most of her legs were exposed and she did not seem like a demure village lady at all. Instead, she resembled more of a leader in the city.

"Bloop! Bloop!"

At this point in time, from the ancient-looking well behind her, water started to overflow from the mouth of the well. A white-shirt ghost with long black hair emerged and approached her at a neck breaking speed.

"What a joke... I, Chen Xin, am still a qualified exorcist of The Exorcists Alliance. How will I possibly die here?"

Chen Xin exclaimed and threw a test tube backwards.

"Piang!"

The glass shattered and a thick fog emerged.

The white figure behind froze as though it was afraid.

"Haha... This Exorcist Concoction cost me 20 contribution points! If you are able to follow me, I shall change my name to yours!"

Unfortunately, before she could laugh, the black hair broke through the fog as though darkness was spreading towards her.

"D*mn it... This isn't an average ghost?"

Chen Xin turned around and started to run. "I've been cheated! Cheated by the village head! If I knew about this, I would never have come here!"

"Whoosh!"

At this point in time, the black hair curled towards her like a carpet unrolling itself.

Chen Xin did not avoid it and her ankle was being caught by the hair.

"D*mn it!"

The black hair was soft and sharp. It had already torn through her clothing and started to burn her skin.

Quickly, she took out a dagger and as the runes on the dagger glowed, she swiped it towards her ankle.

"Pa!"

The hair did not break. Chen Xin started to hobble towards the entrance of the village. "Would I really die here? No..."

Looking at the hair which started to stretch above her, she displayed a look of despair.

"Whoosh!"

In that instant, the hair which flew towards her like a tsunami suddenly retreated as though it had just witnessed something scary.

"Eh?"

Looking at a few illusionary silhouettes ahead, she was filled with joy. "President?!"

"Sneaking out to play again?"

A silhouette emerged. It was a young man in his thirties. He walked over and supported Chen Xin. "If not for the fact that Boss is here, you would've died!"

"Mr President, I'm sorry... However, I've investigated that the ghost in the well is not a normal one!"

Chen Xin ignored her brother and looked towards the leader of the group.

He was tall and had smooth skin. However, he wore a ferocious-looking mask on his face, covering half of it.

"I see it!"

The President had a hoarse voice and it was as though his voicebox was injured before. However, his words sounded firm.

Before him, in the middle of the hair, a white lady emerged.

"Return!"

Against this Murderous Level ghost, he sliced his palm and scattered his blood out.

"He's using his strongest move?"

Chen Xin was shocked.

The person who had saved her was the President of the Exorcists Association of Asia - Zhan Tianhu! Although the Exorcists Alliance was merely an organisation to gather and spread information, they would also require a skilled person to become the President of a region!

He must have had dealt with a lot of ghosts before and was strong enough to survive until today!

Chen Xin knew a not-so-confidential secret. The blood of President Zhan had a strong exorcism property which would allow him to even resist against powerful curses, giving many the time to escape to survive!

Now, the ghost was powerful to the extent where he had to use it!

"Hmmm... It seems that the lady ghost from the well is recorded as dangerous by the association..."

Chen Xin thought to herself. Unsurprisingly, the waves of black long hair started to retreat and finally, even the lady ghost retreated back into the well.

Zhang Tianhu walked up. Because of his mask, no one could see his expression. However, his ferocious-looking mask started to change and a sinister vibe started to spread out.

Following which, he took out a grass doll dyed with blood and threw it into the well.

In all of these, the ghost in the well seemed to be under a certain pressure and could not even come out.

"It's done! I've sealed the ghost in the well. We don't have to worry about it for another 10 years..."

Zhan Tianhu spoke calmly.

"You're indeed the capable president to be able to seal even a powerful ghost!"

The rest of them started to sing praises for the president and Chen Xin's eyes glittered in admiration for him.

"Unfortunately... this is not the place!"

Zhan Tianhu sighed and spoke in a soft voice.

"Mr President!"

At this point in time, one of his members appeared stood out and reported with a weird expression.

"We have news that the curse of the pawnshop has been destroyed!"

Chapter 524: Turning into Reality

"It's impossible!"

After hearing this piece of shocking news, Chen Xin and her brother exclaimed.

After all, that was the paranormal pawnshop!

Even the President would avoid it at all costs. He had once warned them that if they were to encounter it, they had to flee from that powerful curse!

How could it be destroyed so easily?

It was impossible! The Exorcists Alliance had made sacrifices and concluded that even the lowest level of ghosts in this world would be impossible to destroy!

"Which elite exorcist is the one who managed to break the curse?"

Chen Xin quickly asked.

Speaking of this, Zhan Tianhu felt that it was weird. "This person has never registered himself in the Exorcists Alliance before. He is also not a known powerful person, but a mere paranormal detective... According to the information, he is only 20."

"How is that possible?!"

In that instant, everyone was in disbelief.

"The person who sent this piece of information is one of the elder disciples of the Golden Mountain Monastery..."

Zhan Tianhu let out a bitter laugh.

The Golden Mountain Monastery was a well-known powerhouse member of the Exorcists Alliance. They would not lie about it!

"Furthermore... This person is willing to deal with other powerful ghosts and curses and is now requesting information

from us... The stronger the ghost, the better..."

"Wow..."

Everyone there was stunned.

Even though they were all exorcists, they would stand almost no chance against a curse. They would also hope for weaker ghosts to deal with. Who would be so unwise to go against powerful adversaries?

This person would either be a fool or have the utmost confidence in himself!

"Who would've thought... that there would be such a talented person among us exorcists..."

Zhan Tianhu concluded. "Let's move. I can't wait to see him."

"Yes, President!"

The few of them quickly agreed. Only Chen Xin stood at where she was and appeared unjust.

Before they left the small village, Zhan Tianhu turned around and sighed. 'It's not here... I will surely find the source of all these! For myself, for my family and for mankind!'

...

Ma Paranormal Detective Corporation.

Fang Yuan crossed his legs and sat down as he started to feel the power of the Strange Level curse inside him.

'This seems like the effect of the curse of the pawnshop... After sealing the 3rd ghost, My Spirit Sealing Body not only increased by a level, I can also sense that the first ghost in me is recovering even quicker than before.'

To him, this was not the bad thing. It only meant that he had an additional Strange Level ghost to strengthen himself.

As long as he did not cross the limit in completely releasing the

curses, this additional curse would benefit him instead of harm him.

Of course, if he was careless to release two Strange Level ghosts at once, he wouldn't be able to manage it even with his current stats.

'Next time, as I seal more and more ghosts and curses, the Spirit Sealing Body will become an atomic bomb. Not only would I not dare to use it recklessly, the enemy would also hope that I survive. If I were to die, the complete release of so many curses and ghosts would become the most destructive force the world would ever face.'

'However... The curse of a Strange Level paranormal presence is indeed unique... I wonder what type of abilities would the first ghost sealed in me have?'

Fang Yuan thought to himself. Suddenly, he could hear a lady's shriek.

"Hmmm?"

He stood up like a rising sun. "What's this? How dare a ghost trespass the detective corporation right in front of my nose? Or could it be the curse sealed in me being accidentally released?"

He pushed the door open and a corpse laid in the living room. A pool of dark-red blood started to spread from the corpse.

"A curse?"

Fang Yuan frowned. His body turned dark-purple and his eyes turned golden as he scanned his surroundings. He became confused. "This fog... How could it possibly hide even from my Fiery Golden Eyes?"

Such a curse would be as powerful as a Strange Level curse!

"Interesting... This doesn't seem like it's from my Spirit Sealing Body, but a foreign curse!"

Fang Yuan revealed a sinister smile.

His Spirit Sealing Body was not like a sieve. Even if he were to accidentally release a ghost or curse after getting injured, he would be able to immediately seal it back.

Obviously, this wasn't the case now.

"Get... lost!"

In that instant, Fang Yuan had decided to release 50% of the power of the Icy Zombie in him!

Under such pressure, all Murderous Level ghosts would have to retreat and even Strange Level ghosts would be exposed.

"Ding!"

The entire room shook and everything froze.

"Save... save me..."

The lady lying in the pool of blood stretched her hands out and it sounded like Ma Xiaoling.

"I want to see what you actually are..."

Fang Yuan looked on seriously as his right hand began to turn dark purple. It was as though a layer of armour was growing on him as he stretched his arm towards the lady in the pool of blood.

The lady was wearing a dress and laid on the floor. As Fang Yuan reached out to grab her, she flipped around and revealed her face which was half destroyed.

"Save... save me!"

The half-faced lady screamed. Suddenly, she reached out towards Fang Yuan and pulled him into a black hole!

"Bang!"

Fang Yuan landed on the ground and was unharmed. As he examined his surroundings, he appeared stunned.

"Is this... The Tantai Mansion?"

He was in a small backyard and the plants here gave him a sense of familiarity. This was the place which he had lived in for the first 5 years of his life.

Slowly, the patriarchal hall and Hall of Sacrifice slowly appeared in the background.

"You... cannot escape!"

Suddenly, a silhouette appeared before him and a voice echoed from afar.

"Tantai Guijing?!"

Fang Yuan looked at the family head of the Tantai Family. He had an expressionless look and continuously mumbled the same few words over and over again as blood flowed out of his eyes.

"You... cannot escape!"

Suddenly, a few more silhouettes appeared behind him. They were the family heads of the Tantai Family. However, they all appeared pale and were bleeding from their eyes. All of them resembled ghosts!

"Tantai Mieming... Come back!"

"Come back!"

"Come!"

...

The oppressing silhouettes almost overwhelmed Fang Yuan.

In the patriarchal hall, a fearsome spiritual aura filled the skies and the surroundings started to turn into something which resembled a 'Door'.

"It's... it!"

Fang Yuan appeared stunned. Finally, he knew the source of this paranormal presence. It was the curse which had plagued the

Tantai Family for years!

Now, it had only displayed a few illusionary silhouettes of ghosts, but it was already enough to invoke a sense of danger into Fang Yuan.

"I cannot allow it to appear!"

A black robe appeared and draped itself of Fang Yuan and his eyes turned into black holes. "Release both at once, combining both curses!"

In that instant, he had released two types of Strange Level curses at once and had released them to the extent of his own limit!

"Rumble!"

The space around him shook and under the pressure from the curses, the silhouettes of ghosts disappeared.

Even the illusionary buildings vanished as though they were part of a dream. Both Strange Level curses started to lash out at the huge door in front of them.

"Gong! Gong!"

The cries of wronged souls filled the air and almost half of the ghosts on the door vanished.

"Kacha! Kacha!"

Cracks started to form on the door and the entire dimension started to crumble.

...

"Phew..."

In the detective corporation.

Fang Yuan in black robes abruptly opened his eyes. "That was close!"

Although he was still in the office and everything felt like an illusion, Fang Yuan was aware that the curse which had plagued

the Tantai Family for years had finally come for him!

"To think about it... Although the curse will only strike hard every 20 years, during this 20 years, it will still have to kill someone every few years! Now that the Tantai Mansion is trapped in the Netherworld, it will only follow the bloodline and seek for me!"

As a member of the Tantai Family, Fang Yuan would never be able to erase the curse from himself!

It was already unexpected for Fang Yuan to be able to enjoy 15 years of peace.

"I owe this to the scapegoats of the Tantai Family. Also, because of the fact that I had sealed the first ghost upon my birth, I'm sure the Door must be affected by it..."

Fang Yuan quickly thought about the possibilities.

"The curse had been activated this time, but I had used the power of two Strange Level paranormal presences to resist it. I'm confident that it will not be able to harm me a single bit even when the cycle completes in a few years time."

The true Curse of the Green Bronze Door was the peak of all Strange Level paranormal presences and nothing could compare to it.

However, Fang Yuan was not a weakling too!

As long as Fang Yuan was not against the physical Green Bronze Door or that the Green Bronze Door was not at its maximum potential, Fang Yuan had nothing to be afraid of even if the curse were to attack him from afar.

"Of course... Although I do not fear it, this does not mean that others do not fear it!"

Fang Yuan sighed and walked out of the office.

Two bodies laid on the ground. They were Ma Wencai and Ma

Xiaoling.

Ma Xiaoling was still in a good condition. Although she had fainted, she gripped on tightly to a protective talisman and a dim glow covered her and the neighbouring Ma Wencai.

This plump-looking uncle seemed to be almost on the brink of death and was on his final breath.

"Sigh... It seems like I have to leave now!"

Fang Yuan felt a little apologetic for unintentionally causing this mess.

Fortunately, the disaster was contained. With his superior medicinal skills and skills in making concoctions, as long as the two of them were still alive, he would still be able to save them.

"Hmm? It seems like something bad has already happened..."

While he was treating the both of them, he could sense something. As he looked towards the direction of the Tantai Mansion, he sighed.

...

At the same time.

In the deserted mountains where the Tantai Mansion was.

Thunder roared and a layer of black fog appeared.

Slowly, an ancient-looking mansion started to appear.

After Fang Yuan had retaliated against the curse, the survivors of the Tantai Family in the Netherworld took this opportunity to attempt a return to reality!

In that instant, the Netherworld started to converge with reality. However, no matter how hard the Tantai Mansion tried to become real, it was still unable to do so.

Finally, after a few moments, the black fog started to dissipate.

The Tantai Mansion started to become illusionary once more.

However, a silhouette had successfully turned into reality!

"The elders have fought for this opportunity for me to return to reality... Tantai Mieming, you cannot escape!"

The silhouette mumbled to itself and seemed to be filled with hatred!

Chapter 525: Family Member

"Amitufo... Master Fang!"

Jiese the Monk was stunned as he saw Fang Yuan who had come to look for a roof over his head.

"Monk... the room that you have rented is a little too... lousy?"

Fang Yuan tossed his luggage on the ground and commented on the room with dissatisfaction.

"For a traveller, I am already satisfied to have a place to stay. Most importantly..."

Jiese the Monk blushed. "I don't have money!"

"That's true... According to you, this is the first time you have ever left your mountain..."

Fang Yuan nodded his head. "Don't worry. Looking at your skills, you will be able to get anything you want if you help any haunted house perform an exorcism..."

"Amitufo, that is what I think too."

Jiese the Monk did not hide his thoughts and spoke the truth.

Even among the Exorcists Alliance, there were only a few exorcists who could really deal with ghosts. The members of the alliance spent most of their time telling the fortune for others or provide blessing services, which were totally unrelated from exorcism.

To any exorcists, it was not as worth it to risk their lives against powerful ghosts and curses in order to earn a living. They would rather do other things to get rich!

"But... Why are you here?"

Jiese the Monk froze on the spot.

He knew that Fang Yuan was ruthless. Although Fang Yuan had

the skill to seal ghosts and seemed reliable, if he were to accidentally release the ghosts, Jiese the Monk would be the first to die!

"Recently, I've felt danger all around me. I cannot rely on the both of them at the office, so I've come to look for someone I can rely on to help me!"

Fang Yuan shrugged his shoulders and spoke the truth, which almost choked Jiese the Monk.

Although he had successfully defended himself from the attack of the Door, it was still the strongest curse Fang Yuan had ever seen in his life. He wasn't even sure if Jiese the Monk would be able to help him fight against such a strong curse.

Furthermore, although Fang Yuan's killer moves were the ghosts sealed in him, his Spirit Sealing Body was also a double-edged sword. If he was not careful enough, he might just harm the people around him, especially if he were to release two Strange Level curses at once!

This was the reason why Fang Yuan wanted to move out as soon as possible to look for Jiese the Monk.

"It's alright... Considering your abilities and good karma, you will remain unharmed even if I were to accidentally release the ghosts in me!"

Fang Yuan comforted Jiese the Monk. "If you want me to leave, then feed me with intelligence from the alliance. I will be able to start on my world tour then..."

With the experience of fighting against the Curse of the Door, Fang Yuan had gained a deeper understanding of his own capabilities.

The power of two Strange Level curses would not be enough to fight against the Green Bronze Door.

In order to stand any chance against it, Fang Yuan had to find

stronger curses to seal!

In reality, other than the Exorcists Alliance, Fang Yuan also had a few followers under him. They were the traders of the pawnshop.

For instance, Lu Bingqi had been tasked to search for another curse as powerful as the pawnshop.

Fang Yuan had also promised him that if he were to find a Strange Level curse, Fang Yuan would help him remove the seal from his soul. With this, he would not have to worry about the traders not taking their tasks seriously.

'With so much control, I'm sure I will be able to find something, right?'

Just as he was thinking to himself, Jiese the Monk was feeling the pressure from him. At this moment, Jiese the Monk excused himself to pick up a call before returning to Fang Yuan with joy written all over his face. "After the alliance had heard of your story, they are extremely interested in you. The leader of our area is already on a flight and is about to reach us soon!"

"The leader of our area?"

Fang Yuan replied casually. "Alright then, I shall pay him a visit."

He picked his luggage up and walked out towards the door.

"Eh?"

Jiese the Monk appeared confused.

"I've already bought the apartment next to yours. Do you really think I will want to squeeze with you?"

Fang Yuan revealed a disgusted look and turned around. Jiese the Monk was lost as he stared blankly at his simple-looking apartment.

...

"I'm finally... back here!"

The plane gently landed on the runway and a row of passengers walked out of the plane.

Zhan Tianhu looked towards the city and sighed.

"Eh? President, have you been here before?"

Chen Xin immediately became excited and started to pester Zhan Tianhu.

"Alright sister, don't disturb the president!"

Chen Xin's brother held her back.

The weird thing was that although there were a lot of tourists, none of them felt that Zhan Tianhu's mask was out of the norm. Surprisingly, he had safely made it through the customs.

"Hehe... Actually, this is my hometown!"

Zhan Tianhu chuckled.

"Your hometown? If that is so, where is your house?"

Chen Xin's eyes were about to ignite with excitement.

"House?"

Zhan Tianhu was in a daze. "In the depths of the mountains, my house remains sealed there. We rarely interact with the outside world... Furthermore, I..."

He shook his head and paused.

Seeing this, no matter how insensitive Chen Xin was, she was still able to tell that this was a painful memory for the president. Therefore, she kept her mouth shut and did not press on.

"Alright, let's look for a place to stay first. It's best if we can rent an entire apartment. After all, considering who we are, it's not very appropriate to stay with others!"

Zhan Tianhu spoke with an assertive voice.

"Chen He, I'll leave this to you. Chen Xin, contact Master Jiese!"

"Alright!"

As the president, he gave out his orders and his subordinates could only obediently follow his orders. Not long after, they quickly settled down in an apartment on the outskirts of the city.

"President!"

Although Chen Xin was a hopeless romantic, her culinary skills were rather good. She whipped up a meal with vegetables and buns with meat fillings. As they ate, she updated everyone on the current situation. "I have already contacted Mas... Master Jiese. He told me that that person is just beside him and will be able to meet us anytime. Right, his name is Fang Yuan!"

"Fang Yuan? Fang Yuan! I've never heard of him!"

Zhan Tianhu stuffed the last bun into his mouth. "It seems like he is anxious as well. Inform him that we shall meet him here tomorrow!"

As the President, his subordinates were well-trained and he did not have to worry about security.

Even though Fang Yuan could deal with the curse of the pawnshop, the President had nothing to worry about!

After all, the methods which were effective in dealing with curses might not be as effective against humans. Furthermore, all of them had skills of their own and they had nothing to worry about even if Fang Yuan were to turn against them.

Of course, the most expected outcome would be for all of them to combine forces and deal with curses.

This world was already desperate enough and the remaining combat power of the humans should not be wasted on internal conflicts.

...

"The President, Zhan Tianhu! He is an incredible person!"

At the same time, Fang Yuan was discussing with Jiese the Monk about meeting the President.

"This person had become an exorcist 30 years ago and had dealt with countless curses and ghosts. He is well-known and 10 years ago, he was being recommended to take over as the President! It's rumoured that his blood has the ability to repel ghosts and is even more effective than any forms of holy water. However, his most powerful move would still be the half-ghost face mask he wears on his face."

Before Fang Yuan, Jiese the Monk did not hide anything and revealed the entire truth.

"Blood... and mask?"

Fang Yuan remained silent.

Unknowingly, as soon as he heard that the President's blood could be used to repel ghosts, he started to think about the Tantai Family.

He would not know about other families, but he knew best about the Tantai Family.

This seemed to be like an elder awakening a special ability.

"If this is true... Zhan Tianhu might just be a member of the Tantai Family? I wonder what he will think about me as soon as he hears about my parentage!"

Fang Yuan sighed and revealed a weird expression.

After many generations, there were now many forms of mutations and variants.

Considering the size of the Tantai Family, it would only be normal for a few members of the family to turn against the entire family.

Fang Yuan also felt that it was extremely possible for there to be members of the Tantai Family involved in activities in the outside

world.

The only thing that would make everything complicated would be their familial ties.

'However... I am now Fang Yuan. Even if he discovers my identity as Tantai Mieming, he can still choose to be a friend or foe. If he wants to report me to the family, I will just kill him!'

After coming to a conclusion, Fang Yuan returned to his own apartment and sat on the floor with his legs crossed.

At this point in time, the silhouette which appeared together with the Tantai Mansion had also arrived at the city.

"By harnessing the power of the curses, I can sense that there are two members of the Tantai Family here!"

The silhouette sniffed the surroundings and sounded confused. "It's that rebel? Or could it be members of our family working in the outside world?"

"I shall go... and look for him!"

With a soft voice, the silhouette mumbled. "I shall bring Tantai Mieming... back!"

"I know... I know..."

The silhouette knelt on the ground and seemed to be in pain. "I will accomplish the task and bring Tantai Mieming back to the Netherworld, I swear I will!"

He gritted his teeth. "He has to pay the price for giving us 15 years of living in the dark!"

...

The sky was clear and the breeze was light.

Fang Yuan followed Jiese the Monk to an apartment in the outskirts of the city.

"You should know that we exorcists don't really like to stay close

to other humans. We are naturally like that and it is our habit as well..."

Jiese the Monk sighed.

Some exorcists were incredibly strong and would remain unharmed even after coming in contact with powerful ghosts, but normal humans would never be able to survive if they encountered these ghosts.

If they didn't want to lose their family members, they had to leave them.

"Hi guys, it's me!"

Upon arrival, Jiese the Monk went up and knocked on the door. Very quickly, the red wooden door creaked open and a lady in a white collared shirt poked her head out. "It's Master Jiese! I'm Chen Xin, and the President is already waiting for you guys. Is this Fang Yuan? Please enter!"

She started to examine Fang Yuan but Fang Yuan paid no attention to her. Instead, he walked into the apartment casually.

When he had approached the apartment, he had already sensed a familiar spiritual aura which confirmed his suspicions.

After arriving at the living room, he noticed a person wearing a ghost mask sitting on the sofa. There was a group of people behind this person and this person was equally stunned as he looked towards Fang Yuan.

"Zhan Tianhu?"

Fang Yuan's eyes glistened. He had confirmed that this person was a lost member of the Tantai Family

Chapter 526: Confrontation

"You... you're Fang Yuan?"

Zhan Tianhu stood up and looked at Fang Yuan. He could not conceal his shock at all.

As a member of Tantai Family, he possessed a secret technique which allowed him to sense bloodlines which were the same as his.

Although the sensing range was very small, under such a situation where he was face to face with Fang Yuan, he would be a fool if he could not discover such.

"Looks like we have a lot to talk about!"

Fang Yuan nonchalantly sat opposite the sofa and opened a can of soda.

"You....."

To outsiders, Fang Yuan was a childish brat; how dared he seat on equal footings with the respected president? This made Chen Xin enraged at once.

"Chen Xin!"

Zhan Tianhu shouted, "Back off!"

After he was done berating his subordinate, he turned around and looked at Fang Yuan.

"At first, I thought it was just a rumour that you stopped the pawnshop. But after seeing you, I totally believe it! Not bad, there are a lot of things that we can discuss between us! Let's go to the side room!"

"President?"

The expression on Chen He and others' faces had changed. Now that they saw the two of them might have some sort of relationship, they could help but to start guessing about Fang

Yuan's background.

"Who knows he might be President's bastard child or what. As you all know, President has always been single..."

A yellow-haired person suggested cheekily.

"Scumbag Lin Qi, what are you talking about?"

Chen Xin, who had a crush on the president, immediately retorted as though she was a wild cat with its hair all puffed up. "I dare you to repeat that?"

"Hehe, I'm just joking..."

Lin Qi touched his head.

However, at the next moment, something strange suddenly happened!

"Pak!"

Lin Qi's head just suddenly rolled down. The wound on his neck was gushing with blood like a fountain which almost dyed Chen Xin entirely red.

"Ahhh!"

Under the young girl's shriek, the hairs of everyone in the entire apartment stood on its end as they looked around alertly.

"What happened? A ghost invaded? Could it be that this apartment is cursed before?"

Fang Yuan furrowed his brows.

Whereas Zhan Tianhu felt very helpless at his own luck, "Before moving in, I've already checked through thoroughly. There shouldn't be such a possibility."

'Yet another ghost that can hide from my Fiery Golden Eyes?'

There was some sort of bad omen in Fang Yuan's mind.

'This frequency is way too high! It definitely isn't a coincidence!'

Although invisible killing was a trick all Murderous Level ghosts knew, what kind were of people were here?

Not only were there elites from the Exorcists Association here, Fang Yuan and Zhan Tianhu were here too.

To be able to kill an elite member in such an environment meant that this ghost's strength was already close to the Strange Level!

"Looks like... our discussion has to be delayed!"

Zhan Tianhu went back into the centre of his team members. It was evident that there was a tinge of alertness in his voice.

"Ok, let's settle this sudden enemy first....."

Fang Yuan replied with a slight smile, "You wouldn't mind if I use some tricks to find the ghost, right?"

"Of course I wouldn't mind."

Zhan Tianhu answered.

"Great!"

Fang Yuan nodded his head and reached out his right hand.

At this moment, a gap suddenly emerged from his palm. Streaks of black hair extended out and immediately, an ashen and colourless face with a blank stare appeared.

An evil ghost had just been created by Fang Yuan!

This was an ability Fang Yuan obtained after sealing the Paranormal Pawnshop, the ability to derive curses and control lower-levelled ghosts!

"What... what exactly are you?"

Even though Jiese the Monk was prepared for Fang Yuan antics, this scene caused him and the other exorcists to be horrified.

What did they just saw?

A ghost that just crawled out from a person's palm?

"It must be you!"

Chen Xin screamed, "President, Lin Qi's death must be caused by him! He is not human, he is... the incarnation of a ghost!"

After releasing part of the curse, Fang Yuan's physical property was like that of a ghost. Those exorcists who were skilled in sensing would definitely treat him like a powerful ghost.

"Go and find that ghost!"

Fang Yuan did not care about her and immediately commanded. He then immediately extended his five fingers which turned into ghostly silhouettes.

"Ahh! Don't come over, you evil!"

However, Chen Xin was obviously terrified. Seeing as Fang Yuan was going forward, she immediately whipped out a petite pistol, "Die!"

"Swoosh!"

The silhouette flashed past and Fang Yuan arrived in front of Chen Xin. He kicked away Chen He and grabbed Chen Xin's wrist at once. He then took away her pistol.

"President Zhan, is there something wrong with your subordinate's brain?"

Fang Yuan asked calmly as he looked at Zhan Tianhu who stood there with his palm already sliced open.

"My apologies..."

Zhan Tianhu remained silent for a while before he continued, "This subordinate of mine is still under shock from meeting a long-haired female ghost, she might have fully recovered from it yet!"

"Amitufo, I can testify that while Fang Yuan's tricks are strange, he is really a human!"

Jiese the Monk quickly came forward too.

"I believe the master!"

Zhan Tianhu could only belief. Else, with the moves Fang Yuan revealed just now, he could easily kill everyone here!

Before Zhan Tianhu met Fang Yuan, he would never believe that there was someone with such a fast response speed. But now, he totally believed.

'But... obtaining the abilities of ghosts using a human body... isn't one of Tantai Family's inheritance. Could this be that experiment by the elders?'

With such a thought, Zhan Tinahu looked at Fang Yuan's gaze and was immediately filled with mixed feelings.

"Even with a reason, I hate it when someone points their gun at me. This is just a small lesson, if there's a next time, you will be killed!"

Fang Yuan used his strength slightly and a crisp sound could be heard.

Chen Xin let out a wail. It was evident that her arms were twisted broken.

After such, Fang Yuan turned around and headed towards a certain direction, "Found it!"

The six ghosts disappeared into the void just now as they searched for the powerful ghost. But now, they relayed information back which made Fang Yuan immediately charge outside like a bomb.

"Let's follow!"

Zhan Tianhu immediately tailed behind, "We must avenge Lin Qi's death!"

"In front!"

"Turn left!"

Fang Yuan was like a bolt of lightning. After he charged out the apartment, he dashed towards a small alley.

All the ghosts he created were at the Murderous Level or Spirit level. Although it was difficult for humans to look for ghosts, it was much easier for ghosts to look for ghosts.

At this moment, Fang Yuan could sense that the curse he created was continuously dissipating.

Although ghosts could be re-formed after a period of time, such combat power was already almost at the Strange Level stage.

Thankfully, Fang Yuan created six ghosts. Even if a few of the ghosts were destroyed, there would still be a few that stuck on to the enemy tightly which allowed Fang Yuan to obtain the location of the ghost.

How astonishing was his speed? The surrounding sceneries moved backwards rapidly which made that thing unable to escape at all.

"It discovered me! It purposely ran to the big street!"

Fang Yuan dashed onto a road. His eyes locked onto a bus that was about to drive off.

"Stop!"

Fang Yuan picked up a motorcycle on the roadside and hurled it towards the bus like a rock.

"Crash!"

The windows on the bus cracked and sparks flew.

Met with such a situation, cries and wails could be heard from the bus. The people on the bus could not leave even if they wanted to.

"A Superman!"

At the side, numerous pedestrians stared at Fang Yuan in awe.

Some of them even took photographs of him.

"What... the!"

Behind him, Zhan Tianhu, Jiese the Monk and others arrived one by one and surrounded the scene.

Seeing such, Chen He suddenly felt that the kick Fang Yuan gave him just now was definitely not with his full strength. Else, even his intestines would have definitely been punctured.

"That... Jiese the Monk, is Fang Yuan's actions always this rash?"

As Zhan Tianhu looked at the growing crowd surrounding the scene and listened to the approaching police sirens, he felt as though he was collapsing inside.

'After today's battle, will us exorcists be forced to reveal ourselves to the common people?'

'If tons of scary rumours spread, it's not a good thing for humans!'

"I'm not sure about this, perhaps Fang Yuan has his own plans?"

Jiese the Monk was feeling very helpless too, especially after he saw how his bald head was attracting the looks of many. Numerous photographs were taken of him and there were even spectators that came to ask him for autographs.

"Keke! I never imagined that you two betrayers would appear together!"

With no other way to escape, the human silhouette which was being chased stood on the centre of the road and let out a strange laughter.

"Two..."

"Betrayers?"

This piece of information was not huge. Fang Yuan and Zhan Tianhu remained still; however, Jiese the Monk could not help but

feel suspicious as he scanned around.

"No need to hide anymore! I should have met you before when I was in the family!"

Fang Yuan said calmly.

With astonishing memory, Fang Yuan instantly remembered this person, "You are... Tantai Juelie?"

In terms of seniority, this person was Tantai Mieming's uncle. However, his exorcism skills were not that good. It was hard to imagine how he could struggle free from the netherworld and was even confidently seeking vengeance.

"That's right, it's me!"

Tantai Juelie took off his face scarf and revealed a face filled with scars. Children who saw such a face would definitely be scared and cry immediately.

"Tantai Mieming! Tantai Guihu! The two of you can't run away anymore!"

"Tantai Guihu?"

Fang Yuan glanced at Zhan Tianhu. He knew that was his real name.

"Sigh... Juelie, why has your face become like this?"

Tantai Guihu sighed as he continued, "Also... the reason why I don't return to the family is not that I betrayed the family. It's just that I want to look for the source of all this! Believe me, I'm already very close to the truth."

"Tantai Family?"

Outside, Chen Xin mumbled, "How come president never told us that he is a member of Tantai Family before?"

"Amitufo!"

Whereas, Jiese the Monk felt that was reasonable. Only such a

family would produce monsters like Fang Yuan!

"Looks like you are filled with confidence, is it because of that ghost?"

Fang Yuan looked at Tantai Juelie. His eyes glowed with a cold light, "How many times have I told you all, do not interfere with my decision! When the right time comes, I will definitely return and resolve all this!"

Chapter 527: Keeping a Ghost

"Jerk!"

Tantai Juelie roared and became increasingly ferocious-looking. "Do you know the pain and suffering we have endured in the netherworld? Do you know how much we've sacrificed for me to escape from that hell? Do you think you can deny your wrongdoings so easily? That's impossible! My mission is to capture you and let you get the fate you deserve!"

"The fate... I deserve?"

Tantai Guihu looked towards Fang Yuan and his pupils contracted. 'He is indeed the planned creation! If that is so, is he the one responsible for all that had happened 15 years ago? This is unbelievable.'

"Hmm?"

However, Fang Yuan could detect in this instant that all the ghosts he had created were completely annihilated!

A blurred-face ghost in black robes was wielding a sharp blade behind Tantai Juelie. It slowly crept into his body from behind.

"Oh god!"

"Ghost!"

There were screams all around. The headlines for tomorrow would surely be about this paranormal sighting in the city.

"That ghost!"

Tantai Juelie shrieked. "Was it the one who killed Lin Qi? Are you using your body to breed ghosts?"

"Breeding ghosts?"

Thoughts raced through Fang Yuan's mind as he thought about this restrictive spell exclusive only to the Tantai Family.

It was different from his own Spirit Sealing Body. This restrictive spell would alter one's body, allowing it to become suitable to breed a ghost. However, it had limited control over the ghosts in it!

"Is this all you've got?"

Fang Yuan looked towards Tantai Juelie. "Do you think you stand a chance against me with these few ghosts of yours?"

His Spirit Sealing Body was a secret only known to himself. To the people of the Tantai Family, Fang Yuan was merely an incarnation from a Strange Level curse, but he was already strong enough on his own. Together with another top-notch exorcist, their collective combat power was powerful enough to the extent where only the most powerful group of elders in the Tantai Family would stand a chance in taking them down.

"A few?"

Hearing Fang Yuan's comment, Tantai Juelie was a little confused. However, Tantai Guihu was utterly shocked. "Juelie..... How many ghosts... did you keep in you? Are you crazy?"

"Hehe... I've been crazy all along! I am willing to do anything to escape that hell for our family!"

Tantai Juelie was frenzied. "You can never imagine all that I've suffered... the horror of it!"

"Ripppppp!"

As he spoke, he tore his shirt apart.

"Ah!"

Screams were heard. Even Jiese the Monk could not bear to look as he shut his eyes and chanted his mantra silently.

"One, two, three, four... Five! Hehe... You're indeed ruthless to keep 5 ghosts in you. Have you not suffered the backlash of it? Could it be because you share the same bloodline with these ghosts, or is it their intention not to harm you?"

A hint of gold flashed in Fang Yuan's eyes as he examined Tantai Juelie.

He noticed mysterious faces on his heart, shoulders, legs and even on his back. These faces were full of life and their eyeballs could even dart around.

Most importantly, Fang Yuan recognised all 5 of these faces!

"The elders of the Tantai Family!"

Tantai Guihu held his head with both of his hands and almost teared as though he was looking at someone familiar. "Did you turn your own family members into ghosts?"

If one was not careful, one would suffer the backlash of keeping so many ghosts in one's body. Therefore, the best strategy would be for one to keep ghosts with the same bloodline as himself, gaining protection and immunity from the fact that they were once family!

"I'm afraid that... they are all willing ghosts!"

Fang Yuan looked deeper into Tantai Guijing. He knew that Tantai Guijing alone could not do anything to force these 5 elders into himself.

Furthermore, if Tantai Guijing were to forcefully kill them to turn them into ghosts, these ghosts would only be filled with vengeance and would not hold back in dealing with whoever killed them. If Tantai Guijing were to kill his own relatives, these elders would surely deal with him in retaliation.

Now that Fang Yuan understood the situation, he knew that all of these would only be possible if the 5 elders of the Tantai Family were willing.

"Hehe... What a huge sacrifice to give up 5 elders of the Tantai Family!"

Fang Yuan knew that these elders had long turned into ghosts

and might even lose their memories. All that was left of them were hatred and vengeance!

Hatred and vengeance towards Fang Yuan!

At this point in time, these 5 elders were staring intently at Fang Yuan and their eyes turned bloodshot.

"Phew..."

Fang Yuan lightly exhaled and could feel the pressure from a certain being descending upon them. Surprisingly, he smiled. "This is merely the combined power of 5 powerful Murderous Level ghosts, it's not enough! Not enough!"

A black robe slowly appeared on Fang Yuan and the power of its curse started to spread out. Jiese the Monk and the rest started to feel fear in their hearts and were dizzy, as though a terrorizing presence had arrived.

"Indeed... you are not human, but an evil ghost!"

Witnessing this scene, Tantai Juelie's pupils shrank.

He had already expected that something like that would happen. However, this new ghost was very different from the ghost which he had seen 50 years ago and therefore, he was a little confused.

'No worries... As long as I use my killer move, I will be able to win!'

A chilly look appeared in Tantai Juelie's eyes. With a cunning smile, he took out a ceramic doll.

This doll was only as large as a human's palm. It was red and vein-like structures covered the doll. These veins were trembling.

As soon as he took out the doll, Fang Yuan felt a sense of restriction and the original restriction seal appeared on him once again.

"Haha... how do you feel?"

Tantai Juelie laughed. "This is a curse doll refined by your blood once a month, years ago when you were younger!"

With this curse doll, Tantai Juelie would be capable of dealing with even a Strange Level curse.

Needless to say, this doll was covered in large amounts of Tantai Mieming's blood years ago. If Fang Yuan was indeed a ghost, he would undoubtedly be controlled by this doll!

This was Tantai Family's last resort in case Fang Yuan went out of control!

"Kill Tantai Guihu and capture Tantai Mieming!"

Tantai Juelie started to laugh heartily as a face protruded out of his chest. Evil ghosts started to climb out of his body one by one.

"We have to go all out!"

Tantai Guihu slit his palm and scattered his blood all around. The mask on his face started to change and the power of a curse started to spread from him.

This mask was the source of a curse, and it was obtained by Tantai Guihu in a small village after much effort.

In the mask, there resides an evil ghost which loved to steal a human's... face!

If he could periodically feed the mask with what it wanted, he could temporarily harness its power!

'It's a little troublesome for me to deal with 5 of them... Once I surpass the limit, the evil ghost in the mask will first come out and consume me!'

Tantai Guihu felt fearful as he looked at the 5 ghosts casually crossing the protective boundary created by his own blood.

These elders of the Tantai Family had unique powers in them and were powerful exorcists when they were alive. Now that they were dead, naturally, they would become powerful ghosts!

Furthermore, because of their blood, the blood scattered by Tantai Guihu could do nothing to repel them.

To the people of the Tantai Family, such powerful ghosts were only weaker if compared to the Green Bronze Door!

"This cannot go on... When the time is up, I shall abandon the mask and run!"

Tantai Guihu examined his surroundings and came to a decision.

However, in that instant, he was dumbfounded as he witnessed something unbelievable.

Fang Yuan, who was originally frozen in his spot, started to move.

"Whoosh!"

He was extremely quick. It was as though he was a stream of an air current. In an instant, he arrived before Tantai Juelie and grabbed at the ceramic doll.

"Do you really think you can control me with this little toy made from my blood?"

Fang Yuan snickered and applied a little force in his hands. In that instant, the ceramic doll was crushed into powder.

"What about this!"

Tantai Juelie flipped his wrist and held Fang Yuan's hand firmly.

With that, his palm started to turn purple and black runes started to cover his arm.

This was no longer a human's hand, but a ghost's hand!

Only such a palm would be able to make contact with Fang Yuan in his current state!

"Idi*t!"

Fang Yuan shook his wrist and held his fingers together, forming the shape of an eagle's beak.

"Chirp! Chirp!"

The illusionary figure of a giant eagle appeared and ruthlessly pecked at Tantai Juelie's wrist.

"Pa!"

His palm and wrist fell to the ground and he was stunned.

"Oh, so you've been hiding your martial arts in you all along. You've also replaced your arm with that of a ghost's. Do you think this is enough to deal with me?"

Fang Yuan could not hide his mocking expression. Even though Tantai Juelie could conceal this ghost to the point where Fang Yuan could not detect it using his Golden Fiery Eyes, it was still not powerful enough to defeat Fang Yuan.

"Buzz! Buzz!"

The purple hand which landed on the ground started to buzz loudly and split open, revealing a ghostly face which leapt towards Fang Yuan.

"It's useless! Useless!"

Beneath Fang Yuan's black robes, chains flew out and restricted the ghost in an instant.

Of course, this was not the power of the Spirit Sealing Body.

He was making use of the power of the curse of the pawnshop.

This was how he could previously create ghost swarms by making use of the curse of the pawnshop. With this ability, he could take in ghosts and curses and release them at appropriate times.

A Strange Level curse could be this powerful!

"You... you..."

Tantai Juelie was shocked and slowly retreated.

The 5 originally-ferocious ghosts turned around teleported

themselves to surround Fang Yuan. With that, they swung their claws at him.

"Whoosh! Whoosh!"

The chains swung around. Like spider webs, they swirled around Fang Yuan and captured the 5 ghosts in an instant before pulling them into Fang Yuan's black robe.

"Too... Too much! That's too much!"

Even Tantai Guihu was stunned at this scene and was speechless. "Who's the human and who's the ghost here?"

The ferocious ghosts which pushed him to the brink of fleeing were so simply captured. He could never imagine this.

"This person... He might really be able to remove the curse on the Tantai Family!"

Tantai Guihu looked towards Fang Yuan and was filled with confidence.

"Don't... don't kill me!"

Tantai Juelie, with one of his arms severed, realised that even his strongest move was being countered. Looking at the advancing Fang Yuan, he broke into tears and was about to mentally break down.

"Don't worry, I won't kill you!"

A golden hue flashed in Fang Yuan's eyes.

However, in this instant, something which even Fang Yuan did not expect happened!

Chapter 528: A Conversation

Boom!

The encompassing light rays fell through into another plane of existence.

The power of the curse had been activated, and the surrounding buildings were covered in blood-red light. It seemed like a thousand years had passed at that moment and the city was in a state of ruin and decay.

In the dimension, there were only the colours of black and white. The crowd had their mouths open in a perpetual state of horror. They had become statues.

Only Jiese and the other exorcists could move.

"Amitufo...our Lord Buddha. This is a terrible curse indeed..."

Jiese stared at the scene and he could not help but mutter a prayer.

"This..."

The present members of the Tantai Family felt a sense of fear creeping up their veins.

"The family curse..."

"No...this is the netherworld pulling us in. I don't want to go back there..."

Tantai Juelie crawled towards Fang Yuan.

"Save...me!"

Swop!

He had disappeared in a flash.

"Has he been sucked into the netherworld?"

Fang Yuan was bewildered. He did not feel any form of pulling

force. It was as if the curse had given up on him and was focusing its efforts on the Tantai family members.

"Tantai Guihu...can you hang in there?"

He went over to Tantai Guihu and tied a chain around his waist.

"Yes, I can!"

Tantai Guihu's face was pale.

"This is the convergent point between the real world and the netherworld. If you cannot deal with the attractive force, you will be pulled down into the netherworld! Why are you not affected?"

"Who knows? Maybe it's because I'm still young!"

Fang Yuan did not, in fact, know what he was saying but Tantai Guihu nodded.

"That's right...the Tantai family curse only comes into play on a twenty-year cycle. For now, It is mostly the older ones who are targeted. Now it seems like I'll be in danger....."

Swop!

Tantai Guihu had barely finished speaking before a black hole suddenly appeared behind him and swallowed him up.

"Tsk..."

Fang Yuan pulled the chain back towards himself.

Ping!

Two powerful forces were now in direct conflict with each other, and the chain was pulled taut.

"You cannot beat me, nor hope to take away those under my protection!"

An evil spirit resembling a frozen corpse materialised behind Fang Yuan. It took one side of the black hole while the formidable Paranormal Pawnshop took the other. Combining their forces, they inflicted curses on it.

Buzz!

The combined force of the two Strange Level curses caused a disturbance in the void and reduced the surrounding blood-red structures into ashes.

"Come...back!"

Following Fang Yuan's roar, a bedraggled figure was dragged out of the black hole. It was Tantai Guihu.

Ping!

The alternate dimension tore apart and the rays on the sun fell upon them. They were back in the real world.

"Finally...has it ended?"

Tantai Guihu was sweating profusely. He knew that if it was not for Fang Yuan, he would be dead by now. He was sincerely grateful.

"Mieming, thank you so much!"

"It was nothing. By the way, you should call me Fang Yuan!"

Fang Yuan shook his head and said.

"Amitufo...should we discuss how we should go about clearing up the place?"

Jiese walked forward and pointed at the devastation around them as the people around were taking photos. He laughed bitterly.

"Even though the Exorcists Alliance is secretly powerful, we cannot suppress news of such a calamitous event!"

"You don't have to worry about this!"

Fang Yuan shifted his gaze and began his large-scale operation to oblivate information.

He had already thought of this before he embarked on the rescue, or he would not have made such a high profile news-grabbing

move.

It was thanks to this technique that the paranormal activity happening in the world remain largely unknown.

The surrounding people had begun to disperse under the influence of invisible oscillating waves. It was as if the huge mess around them were nothing out of the blue. They also ignored Fang Yuan and company entirely.

"Normal cameras are unable to capture spirits on photographs...don't worry, any intact photographs will disintegrate and everyone who was present will leave this place with no memory of the things we did. As for this place, it is but the scene of a terrible traffic accident!"

Fang Yuan shrugged.

"This...is the Mist? Only the Killer type of curses can influence society on such a large scale."

Tantai Guihu was dumbfounded.

Chen He and the rest were equally shocked. They had realised that this young man had power beyond their imagination.

"Alright! Let's go!"

Fang Yuan glanced at Tantai Guihu.

"It seems like there are many things we need to talk about, isn't that so?"

When they had all returned to their apartment, Tantai Guihu led Fang Yuan to the living room.

"All right, we need to speak frankly to each other!"

Tantai Guihu took down his mask and revealed a face that did not look that old.

"My name is Tantai Guihu. Although I belong to the 'Gui'

generation, I am not yet forty years of age..."

"I am not interested in your age. Also, I am no longer Tantai Mieming!"

Fang Yuan leaned on the couch and clasped his hands.

"So, could you tell me everything regarding your betrayal of the family?"

"The truth is, I did not betray the family. I just did not return when they summoned me!"

Tantai Guihu's face had turned red.

To the Tantai family, a reasonably skilled family member who dared to defy a decree from the family was no different from a traitor, no matter how indignant Tantai Guihu might feel.

Also, Fang Yuan was well aware of the methods used by the Tantai family to control its members. They had their unpleasant ways of guaranteeing the loyalties of their members.

That Tantai Guihu could free himself from these bonds was a testament to his abilities.

"Then why not go back? The tribulation that comes about every twenty years can only be overcome by working together with the family and by relying on the defences of the Tantai residence. Everyone would then have a higher chance of survival..."

Fang Yuan was curious.

"Because my research had reached a vital stage!"

Tantai Guihu did not want to beat around the bush any longer.

"You know it. Tantai family members are afflicted by a blood curse. It is like a leech and we all want to get rid of it for the sake of future generations."

"Isn't the origin of the curse that door? Shouldn't you go into the netherworld if you want to investigate..."

Fang Yuan asked.

"No! I think that door isn't in the netherworld, but in the real world!"

Tantau Guihu went on confidently.

"After all...the ancestors of the Tantai family was mortal. How could they have gone deep into the netherworld and gotten cursed by a door in there?"

"You make sense!"

Fang Yuan somewhat remembered the things he saw when he first crossed through the worlds. Although his memories were blurry, the surrounding area of the door did seem like the real world rather than the netherworld.

"I've read through everything about the Tantai family, travelled the world and investigated all sorts of paranormal phenomena and curses. Now, I have come to a conclusion!"

Tantai Guihu's eyes gleamed.

"Our world...was once free of spirits and curses!"

"Oh?"

He was intelligent to be able to figure this out.

"Curses and spirits just suddenly appeared out of nowhere one day, and they have been spreading like a disease over the past few hundred years...Not only that, I have made a shocking discovery!"

Tantai Guihu became even more serious.

"The curse that afflicts the Tantai family, is probably from the earliest batch!"

"The earliest batch?"

Fang Yuan believed him instantly.

After all, he was much more well-informed than Tantai Guihu.

Additionally, he knew that the appearance of that door was the key and source as to how the whole world got cursed!

"That's right. I've been working hard to find out the location where our ancestor received the curse, and now, I do have a better idea where it is..."

The Tantai family did not use to stay in their current residence but had migrated from a place far away.

These events were ancient and the records were no longer complete. Tantai Guihu could only try his best to piece together the disembodied information and verify them one by one.

"I now know that our ancestor came from a little village in the mountains and was cursed over there!"

Tantai Guihu radiated self-belief.

"If we deal with the source of the troubles over there, we might be able to release the family from the curse..."

'You're too naive!'

Fang Yuan looked upon Tantai Guihu with pity but was unwilling to tell him the truth.

Even though the curse had an origin, once it had been activated, how could it still have chinks in its armour? How could it be stopped?

This was Tantai Guihu's last hope, and Fang Yuan did not want to destroy it.

However, Fang Yuan's interest had been aroused.

"This village...interesting. Where is it?"

"I have already travelled all over our country and marked out some potential spots. Now, I have already narrowed them down to a few."

Tantai Guihu went on.

"Before meeting you, I had just eliminated one spot and was going towards another."

"Interesting!"

Fang Yuan was silent for a moment before he spoke again.

"I want to join your team. Let's go look for the origin of the Tantai family together!"

"It'll be great if you are willing to join us!"

Tantai Guihu could barely conceal his excitement and continued to explain.

"Based on my conjecture, the village might contain some kind of threat...after all, why would our ancestors leave the place if a disaster had not happened?"

"That is true. But to me, the greater the threat, the better!"

Fang Yuan spoke with nonchalance. He went on to ask a question.

"Right, so what is the name of this village?"

"Ghost Sealing Village!"

Tantai Guihu shivered involuntarily.

Chapter 529: The Village

The Village

Three months later.

Fang Yuan, Tantai Guihu and their men first travelled by car, then rented donkeys and equipment before venturing deep into the mountains.

"Old Tan, I hope you know your way."

Fang Yuan was rather happy with Tantai Guihu.

Although Tantai Guihu was knowledgeable and well-versed in the arts of exorcism, he was hopeless at navigation. After being led down the wrong paths several times, even Fang Yuan had become annoyed.

As for why Fang Yuan addressed Tantai Guihu as Old Tan, it was because he did not want to acknowledge their 'generational gap'.

"It's definitely here. It can't be wrong!"

Tantai Guihu was assertive.

"Of all the spots I have identified, it has come down to this one last place."

As he spoke, he noticed how dishevelled everyone looked and could not help but feel a pang of guilt.

"After all...it's been a few hundred years. Time would have changed everything. The village would most probably have a different name by now."

"The name Ghost Sealing Village sounds very inauspicious. It deserves to be renamed."

Fang Yuan had to agree.

"Amitufo..."

Jiese was in the crew as well. His head, originally bald, was

covered in a grey fuzz.

"I did not expect a village in the mountains to be so hard to find, with not a person to guide us in sight."

"This can't be helped. This place is known for being barren and has a toxic atmosphere. Experienced hunters avoid this place. Only the natives who have adapted to the environment inhabit this place. If any trading is to occur at all, it will usually be done at the town on the natives' initiative..."

Tantai Guihu sounded helpless.

"It still isn't too bad over here. However, we might have to ditch our donkeys and walk on foot for the road ahead..."

It was fortunate that all present were exorcists and were physically fit. They were all able to protect themselves through all sorts of spiritual means and were not worried about this small inconvenience.

Fang Yuan, especially, had an inhuman level of physical fitness. Even though he was carrying a load worth hundreds of catties, he climbed the mountains as though they weighed nothing. It was truly an eye-opening sight for the other exorcists.

"Ehh?"

They had ditched their donkeys and scaled another hill before Fang Yuan gave an exclamation.

"What is it?"

Tantai Guihu did not dare to underestimate this junior of his.

"The layout of this mountain range is kind of...strange!"

Fang Yuan's eyes gleamed and he voiced out blandly.

"The layout of the mountain range...are you talking about [geomancy](#)?"

There was a glint in Tantai's Guihu's gaze.

"Mmhm. The mountain range stretches out for miles and diverges into two at a fork like a dragon. There also happens to be a protected spot in the middle of the range. If it isn't a prosperous land, then it would have to be a perilous land!"

Fang Yuan took out the map and compared it to the view. He then understood.

"I have a rough idea of the village's exact location. It should be at the protected spot, the geomantic 'eye'..."

All roads lead to Rome indeed.

Even in a different world, basic geomantic knowledge still held true.

"Come with me!"

Fang Yuan could not help but feel a surge of excitement. He led the way ahead.

"Ah...wait for us!"

It was tough on some in the crew. Tantai Guihu was largely alright, but the Chen siblings had it worse. Jiese the monk, on the other hand, maintained his position at the front serenely.

"The cycles going on between Heaven and Earth are perpetual. In places where wind and water congregate, there would be differences in whether the location is prosperous or perilous. In this case, where the dragon diverges, it is perilous!"

Fang Yuan had his doubts about finding this geomantic 'eye' and they trudged on for two days before they could see a village in the distance.

"Wow...there actually is a village nestled among the mountains. Unbelievable!"

Chen He climbed up to a higher point for a better view. He noticed that the village was surrounded by a circular band of peaks with an opening. That opening was the only way into the village.

It was a quaint little village with a paved road and a water intake structure. It was oddly attractive.

"How did they manage to bring building materials into this place?"

Zhan Tianhu was quite astonished.

"Won't you find out when you explore the place?"

As Fang Yuan stared at the village, he became less doubtful.

The village was built within the geomantic 'eye', a point where Yin and Yang clashed with each other. If utilised well, it would serve as a land more prosperous than any other prosperous lands. If not, it would be catastrophic.

"Amitufo...the builder of the village is a careful person. Look at the arrangement of the buildings. They blend well with nature and possess a hidden energy. Its perimeter is protected by an octagonal formation..."

Although Jiese was a monk, he was surprisingly well-versed in the Taoist arts as well. He then explained his understanding of the location to the crew.

Chen Xin and company were elated.

"If the village is so well-designed, it has to be the Ghost Sealing Village!"

The crew climbed down from the mountains and walked towards the village.

A large man carrying an axe and firewood on his back happened to pass by. He flashed a smile at them when he noticed them.

"You are...visitors from the outside world?"

Although the man had a strong accent, Fang Yuan and the rest could understand him.

"Yes...we are people that have come together from all over the country so as to embark on this expedition!"

Chen Xin stepped forward to converse with the man. She usually handled the human relations aspect of things for the group.

"Sir, do you know of any nearby inn that we could stay at? We have travelled for many days and are exhausted..."

"This village is so poor and out of the way, how could there be any inns here!"

The large man smiled on.

"But if you people want to stay on, I could bring you all to see the village chief. He will help you all to settle your accommodation."

"Ah, thank you so much!"

Chen Xin beamed and gave him a few banknotes.

"Sir, please lead the way."

"This woman is actually pretty useful."

Fang Yuan observed this scene with interest.

The big man led the five of them into the village and to an audience with the village chief.

"Wow, there are actually people who managed to find their way in?"

The village chief was a man who looked to be in his fifties or sixties. He wore a Zhongshan suit with a blue cap. He smoked a cigarette and had a sly look in his eyes.

"Looking for an accommodation? No problem, the Donghua family has an empty house. Tidy up the place and bring them some fresh food. Get a pot too..."

"No need for all that trouble. We brought our own rations!"

Chen Xin declined their offers politely.

"We'll pay too. A thousand per night, how does it sound?"

"Great, great!"

The village chief broke out into the widest grin, which made Chen Xin wonder if she had made an excessively generous offer.

"Right, what is the name of this village?"

Tantai Guihu asked.

"The entrance sign seems to say Five Ghosts Village? Was it changed from an older name?"

"Eh? Lad, how do you know about this?"

The village chief squatted on the floor and lit up another cigarette with a matchstick. He inhaled and exhaled contentedly.

"It seems like you people did not just come here for a tour. Haha...relax, we won't interfere in your affairs. In fact, we want to do business with you!"

"Hmm?"

Tantai Guihu was worried that the village chief might have misunderstood them, but a sudden thought rushed through his mind.

"Are there many graves in the mountains?"

"There are many. Many officials of days long past were buried here. Sometimes, when the rains are heavy, mud would slide off the mountains to reveal bones..."

The village chief was slightly baffled.

"Are you...grave robbers?"

"Of course not!"

Fang Yuan replied coldly.

They were professional exorcists, with absolutely no ties with those petty graverobbers.

"Oh!"

The village chief nodded, but he did not look convinced.

"Alright, we have climbed the mountains for the whole day and are tired. Could we retire to our lodgings?"

Tantai Guihu had listened enough.

"No problem. I'll get Madam Donghua to come!"

The village chief grinned, revealing his yellow teeth.

"Oh, by the way, was the Five Ghosts Village previously named...Ghost Sealing Village?"

As the prepared to leave, Tantai Guihu asked his question casually.

"Lad...you ask too many questions!"

The village chief had dropped his friendly countenance and regarded them coldly for a moment. He gave a dry laugh.

"The village was renamed hundreds of years ago. How can you expect anyone to remember? Haha..."

'Something isn't right!'

Even the most superficial Chen Xin had noticed that there was a problem.

"How is it? What do you think of this village?"

Madam Donghua was a woman in her thirties with wrinkles at the corner of her eyes. She wore a flowery dress and was still a good-looking lady despite the test of time. She did not bother with the niceties and left after preparing the rooms and food.

After she had left, Tantai Guihu gathered the rest to discuss all that they had seen.

"Do you all think that there is anything wrong with this village?"

"Amitufo..."

Jiese began to speak.

"I just feel that this village conceals many secrets, with meaning to be found in every corner. The array expertise displayed over here is too profound even for me. I don't know where to start."

"Mm, ever since we entered this place, I feel like we are in constant danger. It gives me the chills!"

Tantai Guihu creased his brows.

"It seems like this village is haunted."

"Alright, let's eat first!"

He looked at the dishes laid out on the table and smile.

"This may be a little village, but this is good food."

Because the preparation was rushed, there were only two vegetable dishes and one meat dish. There was also a hotpot that gave off a pleasant and mouth-watering aroma.

The Chen siblings prepared to dig in at the mention of food. However, Fang Yuan continued to sit there with an amused look on his face.

"Is there something else?"

Tantai Guihu asked gingerly.

"Yes!"

Fang Yuan had no intention of picking up his chopsticks.

"There is something very wrong with this village indeed. Have you all not realised...everyone here is dead!"

...

Geomancy, also known as Feng Shui, is the art of using energy forces to harmonize individuals and buildings with their surrounding

Chapter 530: Bizarre

"These villagers...aren't human?"

Chen Xin broke out in cold sweat. She replayed the happenings of the day in her mind, meeting the woodcutter, the village chief and Madam Donghua. She could not help but feel faint.

"How could they all be ghosts?"

"Amitufo...I don't feel any ghostly aura emanating from them either. Could it be that all of them are malevolent spirits?"

Jiese was confused as well.

"Fang Yuan's opinion might sound ridiculous, but the unease I feel in my heart right now tells me that this may very well be the case!"

Tantai Guihu continued to speak in a calm manner.

"Ghost Sealing Village...it is now a ghost village inhabited only by ghosts!"

"My god...we have fallen into a trap."

Chen He spat out the chunk of meat he was chewing on and retched. He was cross.

"Since we are aware that this place has a problem, why did we still come here?"

"Wait up!"

Fang Yuan shook his head.

"I only said that they were dead. I didn't say that they were ghosts."

"My head hurts..."

Chen He looked very distressed.

"If they are dead, and can move about, what else can they be

other than ghosts?"

"I can't say for sure..."

Fang Yuan had gone silent. The people in the village were very strange indeed.

All of them seemed like they were enveloped in a mist as if their days were numbered. At the same time, they looked active and not at all like ghosts.

"We have a situation!"

They had realised that something was up.

"It is too quiet outside!"

A mountain village like this would have no lack of livestock. But now, night had fallen and there was a deathly silence outside.

It did not seem like it meant anything, but right now, they were feeling extremely uncomfortable.

Whoosh!

The oil lamps in the house flickered even though the flames were encased in glass. They all went out one by one.

"Strange indeed. This is worth an investigation!"

Tantai Guihu rubbed the mask he was wearing on his face.

"What do you all think?"

"No matter what, let's look for this person before anything else."

Fang Yuan got to his feet and walked out of the house.

Dark clouds swam about in the night sky. A full moon was out and threw a cold light upon the landscape.

"Ah!"

As they inspected their surroundings, a piercing scream cut through the silence. It sounded like it was from a woman.

"It came from Madam Donghua's house!"

Fang Yuan and Tantau Guihu rushed forward to the house and barged the door open.

Ping!

The few of them entered the house, holding an oil lamp between themselves and the darkness within.

"Madam Donghua?"

Chen Xin called out hesitantly, but no reply came.

"What is going on? She was here just now..."

She walked a few steps forward before the light from the oil lamp fell upon a figure. It was a little figure that hung above the ground.

"A corpse? It looks like her son, Goudan!"

Chen Xin could feel her voice begin to quiver.

"Tsktsk...this is sorcery!"

From the light of the oil lamp, Fang Yuan could clearly see that the child wearing red was hanging from the beam. He had been dead for some time and there was a pin stuck deep into his head.

"Amitufo, I've seen this set up before. The South Sea Sorcerer once used this method to acquired souls!"

Jiese rubbed his bald head.

"Could this be...the origin of the curse?"

Chen He was shocked.

"A sorcerer harming an entire village. What could his motive be? To acquire souls, or to derive a curse?"

Hey!

Chen He suddenly felt himself go numb. The hanging dead child had opened its eyes and was smiling at him.

"Ghost!"

Although Chen He was afraid, he was after all an elite exorcist

and quickly sprayed amulet water upwards.

Ping!

The rope broke and this body fell to the ground with a thud.

"Boss, this child came alive for a moment!"

Chen He took a few steps back tentatively.

"I can't sense anything..."

Tantai Guihu had an awful look on his face. He proceeded to cut open his palm and let his blood drip over the area.

"Go examine the boy's body for clues."

"Alright!"

Chen He was confident in Tantai Guihu's abilities and strode forward. He then turned the corpse over.

"Uhm...the corpse is cold. It has been dead for a while. The red clothes were put on it after its death. The pin on its head was hammered in by a person with experience."

He had some serious doubts. The killer must be human. If a spirit wanted to kill, it would not be such a sucker for details.

"Still...the most important concern is whether this sorcery was successful..."

Chen He stood up and dusted his hands.

"This is indeed a corpse and not a ghost in disguise. Even if there were ghosts around, they would have run away when Boss decided to use his blood, am I right? Haha..."

He had barely finished speaking when a stunned look came over his face. It was as if he had seen something incredible. Without any warning, he disappeared.

"Chen He?"

"Brother!"

...

Jiese and Chen Xin has looks of disbelief on their faces while Tantai Guihu could only stare at his hands blankly.

Blood continued to flow from the wound on his palm.

"I have been careless...I have underestimated the 'ghosts' here. They do not even look like they are affected in the least by my measures!"

Tantai Guihu sighed deeply.

"I didn't manage to find any clues either..."

Fang Yuan had lost the gleam in his eyes, but his excitement had not diminished.

'Another curse of the Strange Level?'

"The boy...the boy is gone!"

Chen Xin screamed.

At this point, Jiese and the rest suddenly realised that the corpse on the floor had disappeared.

"Brother..."

Chen Xin fell to the floor, tears streaming down her cheeks.

Everyone, especially Taitai Guihu, was aware of Chen He's abilities. In the face of such a powerful curse, he had little or no chance of survival.

"Sigh..."

He thought for a moment before pulling Chen Xin's palm closer to him. He then drew a talismanic symbol on it with his blood.

'Chen He is most probably dead. I cannot let his sister suffer the same fate.'

"The most important thing to do right now is to seek out other people, or ghosts. We can barely make sense of all that is

happening and we need to get to the heart of the matter!"

Just as he got to his feet, his sharp ears picked out a muted sound.

"Come with me!"

Ping!

In the next moment, Fang Yuan had rushed out of the room with Tantai Guihu and Jiese following close behind. Chen Xin also dried her tears and ran after the rest.

Behind the stove in the kitchen, among the firewood, Fang Yuan noticed a trembling figure in the dark.

"Madam Donghua?"

"Goudan is dead...I caused his death..."

Madam Donghua looked at them with unseeing eyes and muttered to herself.

"Back then...I should not have told him about that place and let him find out about that 'thing'!"

"What 'thing'?"

Chen Xin grabbed Madam Donghua's wrist.

"Tell us! Don't you want to avenge your son?"

"We can't...hehe..."

Madam Donghua peered at Chen Xin in a frightening manner, then reverted back to her dreamy state.

"You will die! Everyone who knows about that 'thing' will die!"

"If we find out...we'll die?"

Tantai Guihu was alarmed. This was a Killer curse. It had far-reaching effects and was highly destructive. There was no way to counter it.

"Interesting. Now...tell me. Let it curse me!"

Fang Yuan stepped forward, warm blood surging through his veins. His gaze was tranquil and had a soothing effect.

"Tell me..."

"N...no!"

Madam Donghua went through an internal struggle before her expression went slack once more.

"...Don't go...to the temple!"

"Temple? Seems like that 'thing' is being worshipped?"

Having acquired this valuable piece of information, Fang Yuan attempted to ask for the location of the temple, but Madam Donghua would not speak anymore.

"This is a small village. Looking for a temple shouldn't be too hard."

Tantai Guihu assured the rest.

"Really? I don't think it'll be that easy..."

Fang Yuan leapt onto the roof and began to scan the entire village. Every house in sight was enshrouded in darkness.

The buildings all looked similar and there were not any places that merited a second look.

"Be careful!"

As Fang Yuan descended from the roof, he issued a warning to the rest.

"It would be dangerous to split up now. Let's go look around for that temple together...by the way, where is Madam Donghua?"

"She...she was just here. She just suddenly disappeared."

Chen Xin was palpitating.

"President...boss, will I die here?"

"No way, we'll all be fine! And we'll deactivate the curse too!"

Tantai Guihu tried his best to be encouraging.

"I've spent too much time and effort preparing for this. I won't waste it all on dying."

"Amitufo, me neither!"

Jiese had a saintly air about him, and his body glowed.

The four of them exited the Donghua house and walked about aimlessly in the village.

It was disturbing that there was no one in sight. It was as if the entire village was devoid of life save for the four of them.

"Ehh?"

Jiese suddenly came to a halt. He had discovered something.

"That is..."

A building hidden behind the trees appeared before his eyes. Although it looked like most of the buildings in the area, there was no ignoring the chills it gave him.

"Here...so this is the temple?"

Jiese was so happy that he forgot himself and was poised to step forward before a cool hand pulled him back.

"This..."

Jiese then realised that the building ahead of him was but an illusion. If he had gone any further, he would have fallen into a ditch.

This village was a nightmare. It would be a miracle if they could get out alive.

"Thank you for saving me!"

Jiese shuddered as he thought about the fate awaiting him if Fang Yuan had not held him back in time.

Chapter 531: Distortion

"Sss..."

Chen Xin drew a sharp breath of cold air.

She had just seen Jiese, a most meticulous monk, walk towards a ditch like he was in a trance.

If it had happened to her, she would not have been able to escape.

"Seems like...we're in trouble!"

In the darkness of the night, Fang Yuan turned towards Tantai Guihu and company, who had most of the colour drained from their faces.

"Be careful. I don't want to injure any of you by accident!"

Before any of them could respond, Fang Yuan unleashed his curse. With his black robes on, Fang Yuan looked like the Grim Reaper. Torrents of fresh blood flowed down from the inside of his sleeves and oozed across the floor.

Black figures began to surface out of the bloodstream. They were spirits and frolicked all over the place with abandon.

"Sw...swarm! It's a ghost swarm!"

Chen Xin nearly keeled over in fright.

Even the most elite exorcist would find it challenging to survive a ghost swarm of this level.

This young man was amazing. What exactly was he? Why was he even more mysterious than this village?

"Go...turn over every nook and cranny in the village and report back to me. Don't miss anything!"

Fang Yuan's eyes were now fully black. They looked even more gruesome in the light of the ghostly fire.

He issued his decree like some kind of ghost lord and the spirits

scattered in all directions.

"Grrk! Grrk!"

The night was silent once more and only the grinding of Chen Xin's teeth could be heard.

"Hmm?"

Through the ghost swarm and the power of his curse, Fang Yuan felt his senses expand in reach until they encapsulated the entire village. He could now detect every single disturbance in the area.

It was this sensory web that allowed him to capture the presence of a terrifying entity!

"The origin...of the curse? It doesn't seem to be of the real world..."

Fang Yuan was silent for a moment. Suddenly, his expression changed.

The ghost swarm he had sent out was being dispatched of with haste. Although many of the spirits were as good as cannon fodder, there were numerous elite Murderous grade ghosts as well!

"Well done...you actually destroyed my ghost swarm in such a short time!"

Fang Yuan gritted his teeth and forced out a laugh.

"What? Was the ghost swarm destroyed in a moment?!"

Tantai Guihu did not know what to feel.

The curse of this village was well beyond what he was capable of dealing with, even as an elite exorcist. The only person they could rely on now was Fang Yuan!

"If this is the case, then we should wait till daybreak...we can't see very well in the dark. We'll be able to find out more in the morning!"

Tantai Guihu suggested after thinking for a bit.

"Mm...we could do that!"

Fang Yuan was fine with anything. After all, he had tested the waters and understood that the curse in the Ghost Sealing Village was of the Strange Level!

Sealing up this curse would require great power and a good timing.

'The origin...could it be in the alternate dimension? No, with my abilities, not even the netherworld would be able to block out my senses...that feeling...'

Fang Yuan was mulling over a major doubt, but he kept it to himself.

'If my guess is correct, this curse would be a pain to deal with...'

.....

Dawn.

As the first rays of sunlight broke through the horizon, they could see that the entire village was enveloped in a fog.

"It is but a common fog!"

Tantai Guihu concluded after examining the air.

At this point, he seemed to realise something and looked around. The 4 of them had arrived at the village entrance unknowingly.

A large man carrying an axe and firewood on his back happened to pass by. He flashed a smile at them when he noticed them.

"You are...visitors from the outside world?"

"Sir...didn't we just meet only yesterday?"

Chen Xin asked him with a puzzled look on her face.

"Yesterday? I was chopping wood the whole day. Didn't meet anyone from the outside world!"

The big man scratched his head.

"Are you people here to tour the place? Or are you archaeologists?"

"How can you not recognise us?"

Chen Xin forced a stiff smile from her lips and looked at the sky. The sun was leaning towards the west. It didn't look anything like dawn.

"Weird people!"

The big man muttered to himself and walked away with his stack of firewood.

Jiese was dumbfounded and experienced a myriad of emotions.

"Time..."

A curse of the Strange Level could reverse cause and effect, and even distort space and time!

Fang Yuan was intrigued.

Even the sages could not turn back time. But this curse could!

Even though the phenomena was local, it was no small matter!

"You are saying...that we have returned to the day before when we first entered the village?"

Tantai Guihu pondered quietly and looked around him.

"Then...where is Chen He?"

"In an infinite time loop, a death caused by the curse is irreversible?"

Fang Yuan nodded to himself. He understood more now.

"Impossible, how can time turn back...why can't my brother come back?"

Chen Xin put her head in her hands. She looked as though she was about to suffer a breakdown.

"Actually, it isn't hard to figure this out. Our equipment and

appearance have reverted back to the way they were on the day before..."

Fang Yuan looked down at the belongings he was carrying with him. He then strode towards the village assertively.

"The curse was activated the moment we entered this village. We won't be able to leave the place unless we resolve it once and for all!"

They knew their way around since it was their second day in the village.

Jiese was especially alert after being reminded by Fang Yuan to beware. He found it weird that the villagers were largely expressionless with a vacant look in their eyes.

"Haha..."

A ball woven from reefs rolled into their path with a child following close behind. Chen Xin was taken aback.

"It's Goudan! And Madam Donghua!"

However, the mother and son pair walked past them like they were invisible.

"We have fallen into this time loop..."

Chen Xin broke into tears as she spoke.

"No...I don't want to die. Why did I come here? I want to go home, I want to see my Brother! Boohoo..."

"Alright!"

Tantai Guihu passed her a paper handkerchief.

"Relax...we will defeat this curse."

"It's...it's all your fault! If it wasn't for you, why would I be in this godforsaken place? And my brother wouldn't have died!"

She used to feel that her crush on Tantai Guihu made her willing to do anything for him.

But at this point, with her life in danger and the curse hanging over all of them like an axe, she realised that she wanted to live more than anything else.

"Xin'er..."

Tantai Guihu was speechless.

"I don't want to see you ever again!"

Chen Xin shouted at him and ran towards the village entrance.

Fang Yuan could not help but shake his head at this scene. If the curse could be easily undone, wouldn't it make everything that has happened a joke?"

"I'll go after her!"

Tantai Guihu gritted his teeth. He knew that Chen Xin had no hope against the danger that they faced. He could not give up on her, especially seeing how her brother had died for him.

"Fine. We'll split into two groups. Jiese and I will go look for the village chief and the temple. Let's meet at Madam Donghua's house tonight!"

Fang Yuan nodded.

In truth, he had long considered Chen Xin a burden. If she wanted to look for trouble herself, she could go ahead.

Also, now that they had found the Ghost Sealing Village, even Tantai Guihu was no longer of no use to him.

After watching Tantai Guihu disappear into the distance, Fang Yuan turned away nonchalantly and proceeded to seek out the village chief.

"Yes? Looking for accommodation, sure!"

The village chief agreed readily.

"Don't worry, we will pay for our lodgings. Also, I am an archaeologist and would like to visit your temple. Can we?"

Fang Yuan flashed a bright smile.

"Temple?"

The village chief changed his expression.

"There's nothing to see over there. If you want to examine our antiques, we do have quite a few..."

"Full of rubbish. I won't play this game with you."

Fang Yuan kicked out at the village chief after saying his piece.

Ping!

The village chief had never met anyone this mercurial and screamed as he hit the wall at the far end.

"We have a troublemaker in the village!"

"Hit them! Kill them!"

The villagers responded to the cries of the village chief's wife. Armed with hoes and pitchforks, they surrounded Fang Yuan and Jiese angrily.

"Scram!"

Fang Yuan held up a rock and crushed it into powder with his bare hand. He then threw out the powder towards the mob.

Poof!

Mists of blood burst out among the mob and their shrieks filled the air.

"Amitufo...these are real people!"

Jiese was perplexed.

"Have mercy! Don't go on a senseless killing spree!"

"What if I want to? Are you going to stop me?"

Fang Yuan narrowed his eyes.

"No, but at least allow me to recite the reincarnation mantra for

them!"

...

Fang Yuan did show mercy in the end and refrained from killing anyone.

The village chief had decided to cooperate with Fang Yuan, albeit reluctantly, after seeing his superior martial arts display. They were led to the temple.

"S...sir, you may take whatever you want to. Don't hurt us, and we'll do whatever you want us to!"

The village chief pulled a long face and took out a bronze key laboriously. He used the key to open the door into a yard.

This yard was hidden among buildings that all looked the same. If they did not have a good guide, they would have spent days looking for it.

Fang Yuan strode across the yard and stopped in front of the main hall. He stared at the rows of tablets before him.

"The memorial tablet of ancestor Gui Kao..."

Jiese read out the inscriptions on a random tablet and turned sharply to the village chief.

"Sir, what is your surname?"

"My surname is [Gui](#)"

The village chief pulled an even longer face.

"I'm telling the truth. It's not a joke."

"I see!"

Jiese nodded.

The Gui surname was indeed a surname with ancient origins.

According to the village chief, most of the people living in the vicinity had the surname Gui, which gave rise to the name of this

village they were stuck in: Five Ghosts Village.

.....

Gui is the pinyin of the Chinese character for 'ghost'.

Chapter 532: Name

"How is it going? Any new discovery?"

Jiese watched as Fang Yuan used his Fiery Golden Eyes to scan the surroundings.

"No! It's all clean!"

Fang Yuan shook his head and turned to face the village chief.

"Is this really the temple?"

"Sir...my ancestors are all here? Why would I lie?"

The village chief replied hurriedly upon noticing Fang Yuan's scowl.

Fang Yuan could tell from his reaction that he was telling the truth.

"Is there nowhere else other than this place?"

"Yes, there is nothing else!"

"Strange!"

Fang Yuan shook his head.

"Let's go! We'll go look for Madam Donghua!"

"Amitufo!"

Jiese has a grave look on his face.

"Could it be...that you want to receive that 'thing's curse and try to save Goudan's life?"

"Things probably can't get any worse, am I right?"

Fang Yuan nodded and took Jiese to Madam Donghua.

"What is this about finding out about something and being cursed as a result?"

The woman was bewildered.

"What are you even talking about?"

"We monks never say frivolous things!"

Jiese looked very serious.

"I can read fortunes. Your child has a black mark looming over him. He might experience a calamity tonight!"

Since Madam Donghua did not appear to know anything, Jiese guessed that they probably came into contact with the curse after entering the village. He wanted to observe any new developments from up close.

"You are crazy! How dare you curse our Goudan!"

Madam Donghua would have stared daggers at Fang Yuan if not for his burgeoning notoriety in the village.

"Alright, we are going to board at your house. From this very moment, you and your child will not leave my line of sight, is that clear?"

Fang Yuan could not be bothered to listen to her protests and handed her a wad of banknotes upfront.

"If you can follow my instructions, this money will be yours. If you don't..."

He pressed his palm on a nearby wall and gave it a little push.

Boom!

The entire wall fell backwards with a resounding crash. Goudan was so afraid that he burst into tears.

"You people..."

Madam Donghua lowered her head and look as though as she was about to cry "Are you kidnappers? No! Goudan is more important than anything in the world. Over my dead body!"

"Enough, I've made myself clear enough. If you continue to make noise, I'll tie up the two of you!"

Fang Yuan's gave her an icy stare.

The villagers nearby were terrified and pretended to go about their business. Madam Donghua had no choice but to wipe her tears and agree.

Fang Yuan and Jiese followed the arrangements of the previous day and moved into Madam Donghua's house. All that was left to do was to wait for nightfall.

This time, though, the mother and son pair would not leave their line of sight.

"Amitufo..."

Other than to utter the occasional chant, Jiese sat there silently without drinking or eating, and kept his eyes fixated on Goudan.

According to their earlier investigations, this adorable boy was about to die.

But he was confused all the same.

The boy looked very much alive to him, as did the other villagers!

'I wonder how Mister Tantai and Miss Chen are? Given Mister Tantai's abilities, he would have no problems linking up with us...'

Jiese could only gaze at the rising moon and wonder.

....

Meanwhile. Outside of the village.

"Brother Tantai...what do we do?"

Tantai Guihu had found Chen Xin. She had left in a fit of anger but still returned to him when he came looking for her.

"This fog is unnatural!"

Tantai Guihu's mask had turned blood red and his voice was sombre.

It was not that they did not want to link up with Fang Yuan.

They had just realised that they were...lost!

When they had walked out of the fog, they found that they were travelling along a mountain ridge.

The cold wind blew on mercilessly.

Tantai Guihu took off his outer jacket and pulled it over Chen Xin. He then focused his efforts on sizing up the terrain.

"The footprints on the ground are disorderly. A large number of people must have walked past here not too long ago. We can't be too far away from the village!"

Tantai Guihu made his guesses and followed the footprints. He came to a cave shortly after. The ground around them had been turned over, leaving the soil from the lower layers and plant roots exposed.

"Is this...a tomb?"

Tantai Guihu thought back to the words of the village chief and understood.

"There are many tombs in the vicinity of the village. This ancient tomb must have been exposed due to a landslide. The villagers must have gotten to it and taken away the buried treasures. No wonder the village chief wanted to show us antiques and even hinted to us that he wanted to do business. It seems like he wanted to dispose of the stolen goods!"

Tantai Guihu did not think much of this discovery though.

It was only right that inhabitants in this area rely on the mountains for their livelihood. It was not his responsibility to worry about the conservation of cultural relics.

"Brother Tantai...I am scared!"

Chen Xin shivered when she looked into the gaping entrance of the cave. It looked like the open mouth of a huge beast.

"Mm, let's get out of this place now. We'll come back with Fang

Yuan tomorrow."

Tantai Guihu was not a reckless person and immediately turned around to leave.

Crack!

He had stepped on something crisp.

"This...is the symbol of the Tantai family?"

Tantai Guihu bent down to pick up a broken piece of tile. He looked amazed.

"Indeed...this is the origin of the Tantai family! The ancestors of the Tantai family are buried in this tomb!"

Whoosh!

His words were cut short by him falling through the air.

The ground beneath them had collapsed and the two of them were swallowed up into the black hole.

.....

"Hehe..."

"Ring ding ding!"

The ball made out of reeds rolled about on the ground, the bell in it ringing for all it was worth.

Goudan laughed and played on as if all was right with the world. Like there was no curse, no danger.

Smack!

The ball rolled to a stop beside Jiese's foot. Goudan looked at his busy mother and could not make up his mind about what to do next.

"Amitufo, take it back!"

Jiese smiled at Goudan and handed him the ball.

'Strange...why isn't anything happening?'

Seeing Goudan receive the ball and thank him politely, Jiese became even more unsure of himself. He was inclined to believe that everything he had seen the previous night was an illusion.

'So weird...'

Goudan was curious too. Why did this two formidable uncles insist on staying in his house to keep an eye on both his mother and himself?

He had to admit that he was in awe of Fang Yuan.

Raw power could usually win over little children. Every person would have dreamed of becoming a hero when they were younger.

Never mind, off to dinner.

Just as Goudan prepared to dig in, memories flooded in.

It seemed to be from the afternoon of that same day.

The emergence of the sun had cleared up all the puddles on the ground. He was walking along the mountain trail. There were many people, many footprints. Everyone was jostling for their turn to enter a dark cave, to get their hands on the many things in that cave.

There were many toys in that cave.

The most striking object in that area was the great blood-red monolith. It said something that he could not read, but the people around him were mocking it.

"'Restricted Area, No Entry'? What a joke!"

"The artefacts in the ancient tomb belong to our village!"

"One would die if one finds out about it. The sealing of the tomb...what is this? A ghost story?"

....

Madam Donghua held Goudan's little hand tightly. The dimness of his surroundings had a frightening quality to it. The men

around him were holding onto torches, and the light illuminated their faces in a hideous way. It made them look like savage ghosts.

"Let's go, Goudan, let's hurry up and leave!"

With a firm grip, Madam Donghua pulled Goudan towards the cave entrance.

Except that at that moment, someone had already read 'it' out loud!

"Ahh!"

In the real world, Goudan had burst out crying without any warning.

.....

"Eh? How did this thing end up in my house?"

The village chief scratched his head and looked at the bronze item hidden under his bed.

It was a beautiful bronze statue with an archaic feel to it. Anyone could tell that this was a valuable treasure.

"Wait a minute, I think I dug this out. From that ancient tomb..."

At the same time, memories came flooding back.

"Funny. It was an activity that took place in the morning involving the entire village. It's the afternoon now. Where's everyone?"

Since he had discovered the ancient tomb on the mountain slopes, he had activated everyone in the village in the hopes of striking it rich.

"I remember now. That tomb was built like a temple inside. There was a tablet that said the items within were cursed, and to stay away. Especially the name on the first memorial tablet. Finding out about it would result in... death!?"

The village chief gave an involuntary shudder and tried to forget

all of that by shaking his head violently.

Not even Fang Yuan could find out about his memory loss. Now that the village chief had remembered everything, he would never forget it for as long as he lived.

"That...that name!"

"Tantai..."

Poof!

Streaks of red appeared on the village chief's body and his entire person split apart sickeningly. There was blood everywhere.

A spirit with a blank gaze rose slowly from the blood red puddles. It had taken on the face of the village chief!

.....

"Cough cough..."

Tantai Guihu helped the dishevelled Chen Xin up in the large pit.

"Are you okay?"

"I'm fine! It's just that we seem to have fallen into a crypt..."

Chen Xin let out a forced laugh.

"Not only that, I have discovered something else. Look!"

Tantai Guihu turned his torchlight on and the structures around them swam into view. Chen Xin was surprised.

"Is this... a crypt? Why does it look more like a temple?"

"...I think this might be the temple Madam Donghua was talking about!"

Tantai Guihu and Chen Xin took a few steps forward and examined the rows of tablets carved from green stone.

"My Tantai ancestors are buried here?"

Tantai Guihu bowed to the tablets in reverence. When he looked up, he noticed that there was a lone tablet placed on the top row. It

was surrounded by chains and was supposed to be covered by a curtain which had somehow fallen down, revealing a set of large characters.

"The ancestor...Tantai Moya!?"

Tantai Guihu was not sure why, but looking at this tablet made his hair stand on end and gave him a sense of impending doom.

Chapter 533: Impending

"This place gives me the creeps. Let's get out of here. We'll come back with Fang Yuan tomorrow!"

Shaking, Tantai Guihu pulled Chen Xin along with him and ran hard towards the exit.

They were currently in the great hall of the crypt. They had fallen into its heart when the ground gave way, but by virtue of the exposed ceiling, the way out was laid bare ahead for them.

"Ah! Brother Tantai, look!"

The two of them had reached the mouth of the tunnel. Chen Xin pointed to the stone tablet in front of them, her face as white as a sheet.

"My god!"

Tantai Guihu broke out in cold sweat as he read the inscriptions on it.

The words on the stone tablet were simple. They explained that the place sealed up a 'name' that should not have existed in the world. The name belonged to an ancestor of the Tantai family. He had committed a heinous crime and as a result, he name was cursed.

Everyone who saw or even heard of the name would die!

If they had entered the crypt from the entrance, they would have seen the warning sign first and would have proceeded with caution.

Unfortunately, Tantai Guihu and Chenxin had not, and hence did not see the warning.

"What do we do now? I don't want to die!"

Tears streamed down Chen Xin's face as she tried to forget about the inscriptions on the memorial tablet. But the more she

interfered with the memory, the deeper it was imprinted upon her consciousness.

"I finally understand...why the people of Five Ghosts Village are like that..."

Tantai Guihu had come to a realisation.

"They had intended to move the buried treasure away but saw the memorial tablet along the way, thus unleashing the curse on themselves...they have probably died more than once since then."

Chen Xin understood too and trembled as she thought about it.

A landslide had occurred in the mountains one fine day, revealing the entrance of the ancient tomb.

The villagers of the Five Ghosts Village were overcome with greed and took part in the gold rush despite the written warnings, hence activating the unspeaking curse.

Additionally, due to the distortion of time, death was not the end for them. They were cursed to die and die again every single day in an infinite time loop!

Now, it was clear that the four of them had stumbled upon this neverending cyclical curse!

....

In the meantime, in Ghost Sealing Village.

"The unspeakable taboo is a name?"

Fang Yuan looked at Madam Donghua, who had regained her memory, ponderously.

Strange level curses had peculiar triggers. Sometimes it could be simply a name or even an image!

"But if it was only the name, aren't there plenty of people with the same name? Wouldn't it have caused a mess worldwide? Hence, there must be other triggering factors as well, like

perhaps...within a set location?

This would probably explain why the Tantai family chose to migrate. They must have learnt a painful lesson.

He looked at the mother and son pair in front of him with some pity.

This curse. Death. Just how many times had they gone through it? They would never get used to it because their memories would reset every day, and they would relieve fear and desolation every single day.

"Tell me!"

Fang Yuan was direct.

"Tell me about the name, about your fears, everything!"

He did not know if he could handle a Strange level spacetime curse and was planning to try and in the process, find the source of the curse.

"How can I do that? This is something harmful..."

Madam Donghua was pale-faced. She had been frightened by her experience in the afternoon.

"If you don't tell us right now, your son might not be rescued in time!"

Fang Yuan sneered.

"It's your choice to make!"

The only thing stopping Madam Donghua from telling them was her conscience, but when measured up against Goudan, the scales tipped in the favour of her beloved son.

"Fine...I'll tell you, that name!"

Madam Donghua gritted her teeth.

"Monk, are you listening?"

Fang Yuan turned to Jiese with an amused smile.

"Amituofo, as the saying goes, 'If not me, then who?'"

Jiese's face was solemn.

"Also...it is a fact that the curse already affects us, and there's no escaping it."

"Not bad. You're speaking like a true disciple of the Lord Buddha."

Fang Yuan nodded and turned back to Madam Donghua.

"In that ancient tomb, there is a temple. The memorial tablet on the top row has the cursed name inscribed on it. It was originally chained up and covered up by a curtain, but the village chief thought that the tablet might lead to more treasures and ordered them removed..."

Madam Donghua could remember the events of that fateful day clearly.

"That name...I remember it, it is...Tantai...Moye!"

'It is indeed from the Tantai family...'

Fang Yuan and Jiese looked at each other. They were not surprised.

"Tantai Moye?"

Fang Yuan chewed on the name. His sensory perceptions suddenly established a link with the true origin of the curse.

'The memorial tablet was but a catalyst, not the origin...the true origin of the curse is hidden in the spacetime gaps.'

He now understood why he had not managed to find the origin during his previous investigations.

It was because the curse did not lie on the plane of existence, but along the spacetime axes!

Once more, a deathly silence had fallen over the world outside.

"It seems like everyone has had their memories reset again. The curse is taking place right now..."

Fang Yuan sighed and put on his black robes. His eyes gave off a golden gleam and his hands had turned purplish-black. He was ready to fight.

After all, he was dealing with a curse that could distort spacetime, the most potent among Strange level curses.

'Also...what does this curse have to do with the Tantai family?'

After a deep thought, Fang Yuan stepped forward and set black chains around Madam Donghua and Goudan.

With their souls being kept in check, their expression shifted from one of consternation to one of passivity.

'No wonder I thought they were weird from the start! They had died and revived so many times that they are now neither human nor ghost!'

That was another question answered, but it did not make Fang Yuan feel any better.

His sixth sense and the various occurrences that took place after they had learnt the name told him that the arrival of a terrifying entity...was impending!

"Amitufo, don't worry Madam Donghua, Goudan will be...fine!"

Jiese was attempting to comfort them when a sudden change came over his face.

Madam Donghua had stabbed her hand into Jiese's chest.

"Oh Lord Buddha, Dragon of the heavens, explode!"

Jiese's eyes flew wide open and golden rays shot out. A protective band of light formed around his body.

Ping! Ping!

The two sets of chains were pulled taut, at the end of which were

two malevolent ghosts!

"Hmm?"

Fang Yuan looked over and was surprised to see Madam Donghua's and Goudan's transformation. Their hands were a greenish-purple with very long fingernails. Their appearances were that of ghosts.

"Humans one minute, ghosts the next? There was no sign at all...no, no. They had already died when the curse had hit them for the first time."

Fang Yuan came to a conclusion quickly before turning to Jiese.

"Monk...are you alright?"

"I won't die!"

Jiese took out his medicine pouch and applied the ointment on his wound. The attack had apparently taken its toll on him for his breathing was weak.

If Fang Yuan had not restrained them from the start, the two ghosts would have dug Jiese's heart out.

Wooooowooooo!

At this moment, there was a commotion outside the house.

When Fang Yuan went to check it out, he realised that there were dozens of ghosts wandering outside.

They were all villagers by day but had transformed en masse into ghosts when night fell. With the village chief leading them on, they began to close in on the yard.

"Ghost Sealing Village...this village is living up to its name!"

Fang Yuan chuckled coldly.

"Did you think I will worry about a ghost swarm of this level?"

Shing! Shing!

Rows and rows of chains extended from Fang Yuan's body until they formed a giant defensive web.

His eyes had simultaneously turned into black holes and rays of blinding light shot out from them.

"Ghost...reaper!"

A large black shadow carrying a sickle appeared behind him and swung it with brutal force!

Expressions of fear appeared on the faces of the ghosts, which made them look human for a moment.

The ghosts who had been hit disintegrated as though their bodies were made out of sand..... all that was left of them were skeletons.

The spirit-like wisps that were left behind disappeared completely into the black holes.

"Amitufo!"

Jiese clasped his hands together and was preparing to recite the reincarnation mantras when a change came over the surroundings.

A thick fog had formed around them and the disintegrated ghosts were materialising again. It was as if...time had been turned back!

....

"Quick!"

Tantai Guihu grabbed Chen Xin's hand and sped in the direction of Ghost Sealing Village.

"This curse will definitely not allow anyone to escape... It even made us lose our way so as to force us into seeing the name!"

Tantai Guihu analysed their situation.

"If we run towards the outside world, we will encounter dead ends no matter which path we take. Only by going back to Ghost Sealing Village will we have a chance to survive!"

Indeed, as they sprinted along, they could see the silent Ghost

Sealing Village edging closer to them under the moonlight.

"As long as we find Fang Yuan, we will live!"

Tantai Guihu shouted out loud. Suddenly, a crack appeared on his mask.

"What?"

He was shocked and came to a stop.

"My...mask. Even my mask is gradually succumbing to the curse?"

It was thanks to his mask that he and Chen Xin were able to make it this far without getting harmed.

But now, their greatest protection was losing its power.

"Don't worry Chen Xin, I won't let you die!"

Tantai Guihu cut open his palm again. Even though he did not know just how effective his blood could be at this point in time, it was better than nothing.

"Thank you Brother Tantai...I've always..."

Having gone through so much together, Chen Xin was in tears again and was on the verge of saying something.

Suddenly, the world went dark.

She was horrified to realise that she had returned to the crypt, and Tantai Guihu was nowhere to be seen.

The darkness was suffocating and she experienced a heavy feeling of despair.

"No!!!"

Chapter 534: Backtracking

Around them, the wind blew gently and the skies were clear.

"Is this another timeline?"

He looked around him and saw that Jiese and Tantai Guihu were nowhere to be seen.

Just a short while ago, the curse had altered its nature when it was clear that the ghost swarm was no match for Fang Yuan.

"Specifically, the curse has placed us in different timelines so that it can deal with us separately..."

The village of a year ago, or even the village the day before would be an entirely different one from the village of the present. Any alliance, however strong, would be rendered useless if the curse were to isolate its members.

Fang Yuan suspected that Chen He, who had disappeared right at the start, had been thrown into one of these alternate timelines. Given his abilities, he was probably dead by now.

Except that with regards to this curse, death was not the way out. In fact, death would be the beginning of a nightmare!

"I wonder which timeline I'm in..."

In one swift motion, he arrived at the entrance of Ghost Sealing Village.

"Papa...someone's here!"

A few bare-bottomed children were playing in the mud by the millstone. One of them caught sight of Fang Yuan and ran screaming towards the village.

The children looked scrawny and were hollow-cheeked. Life must have been tough in this village.

"This little rascal..."

Fang Yuan narrowed his eyes.

"Is this the village chief as a child?"

Fang Yuan could see that the child bore an uncanny resemblance to the village chief. But the tell-tale sign was the unique quality of his soul.

"There is indeed someone!"

Before Long, a few large men hurried towards him. One of them resembled the village chief of the present day and scrutinised Fang Yuan with suspicion.

"Who are you? Where did you come from?"

"My name is Fang Yuan. I have questions that I need answers to."

Fang Yuan placed his hands behind his back.

"Of course, to prevent any unwise moves from your end, let me give you all a warning."

Ping!

He stamped his right foot on the ground and what followed was a deafening thud. It was as if the entire village fallen from the air.

"The M...Mountain God?!"

The mountain folks had never seen power like that and all of them fell to their knees.

"Forgive us for not recognising you, My Lord. Have mercy on us!"

'...'

Fang Yuan was speechless for a moment. He then pointed at the village chief's father.

"The name is Gui Shisan, My Lord..."

His embittered smile had passed on to his son. Also, Fang Yuan could tell that they were father and son from the quality of his blood.

"When did your branch of the Gui family arrive in this village, do you remember? Do you know what kind of people used to live here in the past?"

Fang Yuan began to interrogate him.

With everyone in the village taking him for the Mountain God, they told him everything he asked them about.

From the respectful answers that the villagers had given to him, he learnt that the Gui family had already settled in the village for more than a hundred years.

The people who had inhabited this place before them had migrated en masse to another place, and no one knew where exactly.

"My Lord...when our ancestors came here, it was already uninhabited. We did not take over these lands by force..."

The villagers were frightened and some of them were close to tears.

"Don't worry, I'm not here to punish anyone."

Fang Yuan shook his head and disappeared in a flash. Gui Shisan was shocked and kowtowed immediately.

"Tantai Moya!! Tantai Moya!!"

Fang Yuan shouted the name as he sprinted through the forest.

"No...although I can sense the origin of the curse, it feels distant, which means that it isn't on this time axis..."

He continued to speed on with no idea how far he had travelled.

"Since this curse probably has area restrictions, I should leave this place and see if anything will try to stop and kill me..."

Fang Yuan sometimes felt sorry for this curse, just like how he felt about the Pawnshop.

Although the curse was afflicted on him, it did not have the

power to kill him. It was like it had swallowed an iron anchor that it could neither vomit out nor digest.

Beyond the village were mountain ranges. They were filled with lush greenery and were full of life.

A fog suddenly materialised and when Fang Yuan dashed through it, he was unsettled to find that he had arrived at the entrance of Ghost Sealing Village once again.

The village was quiet and deserted, with no trace of life. The buildings were dilapidated and looked as though they had been abandoned for a long time.

"Indeed...the curse is preventing my escape. Seems like I ran away from the previous timeline only to end up in another timeline."

Fang Yuan looked at Ghost Sealing Village quietly.

"If that was the village of forty or fifty years ago, this will probably be the village of more than a hundred years ago...a pity that there is still nothing that I want here."

He ran at the boundaries of the fog again, not knowing whether to laugh or cry.

"Why do I feel a sense of déjà vu? Should I shout the cursed name out loud again?"

Poof!

He was prepared this time and when the fog assailed him and could feel the destructive power of the spacetime curse.

It was a pity that the curse was unable to harm him at all. It had swallowed him up entirely but could do nothing else.

"The curse was going to kill me by making use of a shift in spacetime, but I am simply too strong. I'll exploit it instead and use it to rewrite history!"

Fang Yuan barged through the white fog and arrived at the Ghost

Sealing Village once more.

"Who goes there?"

Fang Yuan immediately realised that two village guards were about to pounce on him. He waved a hand and the two bottles of substance thrown at him exploded in midair.

"Exorcists from the Tantai family? They have been trained well!"

Fang Yuan knew that his physical state was scaring them, and he withdrew the spell that gave him his ghostly appearance.

'The Tantai family has not moved out of the village in this timeline?'

"Who are you?"

Even though they were exorcists of the Tantai family, anyone would be nervous if they saw a ghost with black robes, a greenish-black face and with black holes for eyes transform into a person.

"Hmm..."

Fang Yuan gave a small smile and shot beams from his eyes into the heads of the two guards. He began to interfere with their memories.

"You two did not see anyone here today!"

The ability of obliviation from the Pawnshop was working effectively.

The two elite exorcists scratched their heads and looked confused at their actions. They then went back to guarding the village entrance.

"What's happening?"

A Tantai elder walked out. He did not seem to have noticed Fang Yuan.

"Nothing!"

The two exorcists were caught by surprise.

"...Never mind, just watch the gates carefully. It hasn't been peaceful lately!"

The Tantai elder was on the verge of saying more but thought better of it and walked away.

'Indeed...ghostly abilities work better than human abilities!'

Fang Yuan released his inner spirit again, which manipulate the surroundings such that no one would pay any attention to him. He was practically invisible, and strode casually behind the elder.

The elder walked on until he reached the meeting hall of the Tantai family.

"What happened?"

Dozens of elite exorcists were gathered in the hall. They were all of Tantai blood. The leader of the Tantai clan sat at the head of the table and asked with a frown.

"I went to take a look and the two guards told me nothing. But I still have this strange feeling...maybe 'it' has arrived."

The elder answered with a forced laugh.

"That 'name'..."

The Tantai elders were all silent.

At the mention of this issue, all the elite exorcists became troubled.

"Ever since that day, anyone in the clan who would mention the name of this ancestor would fall under the curse. If not for the curse of the Green Bronze Door, our family would have been wiped out long ago..."

The Tantai clan leader let out a sigh.

"To think that the Tantai family's legacy of a thousand years will fall in one day. That person is truly a traitorous sinner!"

"He's dead. There's nothing we can do anymore..."

Another white-haired old man spoke calmly.

"Although the curse of the Door can resist the curse of the unspeakable name, things won't work out in the long term. We have to uproot the family and leave this place!"

"...It's a good thing that we have sealed up the name after discovering the source of the curse. Later, we shall let the clansmen who have not yet been sullied by that 'name' leave for the south and establish the family elsewhere!"

"We who have borne the brunt of the curses will stay here and see if we can seal up this curse...the Tantai clan will now decree that no family member will return to these lands! No! We should not even leave any word behind. Let us be forgotten by history!"

"Indeed!"

The Tantai clan leader punched a fist into the air.

"I will pass on the clan leadership to Quan and stay here to fight alongside all of you elders here !"

"Hmm? Who goes there?"

Suddenly, his eyes gleamed with purple light and his face turned ash-gray. He stared intently at where Fang Yuan was standing.

"Amulet water of the world!"

"Ghost Locking Array!"

Everyone present were elite exorcists. As soon as they were made aware of a ghostly infiltration, they jumped to action right away and tried to contain Fang Yuan with their special abilities.

"Another ghost has come in?"

One of the white-haired elders looked hesitantly in the direction of Fang Yuan.

"Unless...there is another curse that we do not know of in this village?"

"Even the most savage ghost will have to do a double take when facing our combined forces!"

Another clan elder said encouragingly.

In the next moment, a horrifying chill had invaded their hearts.

Ping! Ping!

Dozens of magical equipment were pulverised, alarming all the Tantai clan members present.

"This ghost...how can this be?"

As the dust settled, a figure emerged.

Fang Yuan, with his black robes and golden eyes, had appeared.

"Great! To think that you were able to detect my presence. The prowess of the Tantai family is quite impressive after all."

"Hmm?"

The Tantai clan leader's eyes widened.

"You are...a person?!"

Although more than a hundred exorcists were present, all of them probably still saw Fang Yuan as a ghost. Only the Tantai clan leader could see that he was human!

Chapter 535: Guardian

"Why have you infiltrated the headquarters of the Tantai family?"

The Tantai clan leader had loosened up slightly upon discovering that Fang Yuan was human. He signalled for the other Tantai elders to retreat.

'Hmm? Seems like this person isn't as ignorant as I thought...right, a leader would not be as reckless as to challenge a formidable stranger to a deathmatch, even if that stranger had offended him...'

Fang Yuan shook off the spell that gave him his ghostly appearance and was human again.

"Sss...!"

The Tantai elders sucked in a collective breath of cold air.

"This sort of magic...looks like it is based on sealing up spirits on the body and forcing them to do one's bidding... marvellous! Truly marvellous!"

An old man stared at Fang Yuan with his mouth agape and bowed deeply to him.

"My name is Tantai Feng. Thank you for your demonstration. If I am able to advance my skills in the future, it will be thanks to you!"

'Tantai Feng? Isn't he the creator of the 'Ghost Channelling' taboo spell?

Fang Yuan rolled his eyes and muttered to himself.

'So I was his inspiration? Wait, I still can't be sure if this place belongs to my timeline. Or is it part of the multiverse? Or even a world that was created by the curse?'

"Alright, you may take your leave, Elder Feng!"

The Tantai clan leader had spoken again.

"My friend, what is your purpose in coming here?"

"To be honest, it was a coincidence. I had not intended to come here at all. You may all call me Fang Yuan!"

Fang Yuan introduced himself in a booming voice.

"Now that I am here, I would like to find out more about two things! Firstly, about the origin of the curse regarding that unspeakable name. Secondly, about the man with the unspeakable name and what he did to sully the name of the Tantai family."

"My friend...you seem to know quite a bit about the Tantai family!"

The Tantai clan leader was bemused.

"So...which branch of the Tantai family are you from? Why have I not seen you before?"

There was no way to fake the blood of the Tantai family and the special curse. There was also a sensory method to identify Tantai family members, and there was no way to hide.

"Can you tell?"

Fang Yuan scratched his head. He knew that they probably would not believe his story of having shuttled through different timelines.

"I'm from one of the minor branches. I just want to know the origin of the 20-year cycle."

"The origin?"

The Tantai clan leader forced a laugh.

"To be honest, Ghost Sealing Village is the place where everything began!"

"So that means..."

Fang Yuan's eyes lit up.

"That 'Door'. Did it appear here too?"

"You...really know a lot!"

The Tantai elder sighed and spoke.

"Since we are family, I won't beat around the bush. You're right! That door used to be here, and the Tantai family has been its 'Guardian' for generations. It's been more than a thousand years since we took up the responsibility!"

"Guardian?"

Fang Yuan was astonished.

"A cursed door needed protection for a thousand years...wait, this isn't right!"

"Who told you...that it was a cursed door?"

The Tantai clan leader said with a hint of amusement.

"Hmm?"

Fang Yuan shuddered.

"Is that Green Bronze Ghost Door the reason how this world got cursed?"

"Of course not..."

The Tantai clan leader had a strange look on his face and asked on.

"Do you know about the netherworld?"

"Yes. When people die, their souls go there. In my opinion, because it coexists with the human world, one on the outside and one on the inside, it can be known as the 'Inner World'!"

Fang Yuan replied and sensed that the clan leader was about to reveal a great secret.

"'Inner World'? Well said...between Heaven and Earth, everything goes through a cycle. The netherworld might be where

darkness gathers, but it was never evil in nature, and was where souls achieved reincarnation...only by passing through the 'Door' that the Tantai family guards can souls be reborn..."

The Tantai clan leader continued.

"Protecting the netherworld and reincarnation is the duty of everyone with the Tantai bloodline! We guardians would never dream of passing through the 'Door' while we are alive, unless we are in a hurry to die!"

"I see!"

Fang Yuan lowered his head.

From this perspective, the original 'Door', with its responsibilities of receiving souls and facilitating the process of reincarnation, was a good thing to the worldly cycles.

Of course, everything changed when that person had went on to do something wrong.

"Then...something would have gone wrong over the course of a thousand-year duty, am I right?"

"Yes...everything changed after that one ancestor with the unspeakable name was born! His great talent was apparent from a young age and was said to be wise beyond his years. At the age of eighteen, his abilities had exceeded everyone else in the Tantai family, and the rest saw him as the future leader and hope of the clan!"

The Tantai clan leader's revelation of the tale then took on an ominous tone.

"Later, for unknown reasons, he committed a huge mistake... He had opened that 'Door' with his human hands! The netherworld was changed forever and the human world was ravaged by calamities. The spirits came... and the curses as well!"

The Tantai clan leader sighed.

"The 'Door' fell away completely into the netherworld and the Tantai family was cursed for betraying our duty!"

"What about...the reason?"

Fang Yuan enquired.

"Why did he do that?"

"Some say he did it because of his ambition, and others say he did it to revive a woman..."

The Tantai clan leader smiled bitterly and shook his head.

"Whatever it is, the Tantai family was burdened with the curse ever since that person and the 'Door' disappeared. Recently, I've even realised that the ancestor's name has become a part of the curse! I do not know what this represents but it makes me fearful."

To have his name become a curse would mean that either Tantai Moye has become a very powerful source of the curse, or...that he has gotten what he wanted and has ascended to a higher plane of existence.

In layman terms, he would have joined the ranks of Buddhas, gods and demon lords!

"Is this the case? Sounds logical to me..."

Fang Yuan nodded.

"But...I don't believe you!"

"What? You are accusing me of lying to you!?"

The Tantai clan leader was stunned.

"You don't have any reason to lie, but people are easily tricked and cannot be trusted even if they see things with their own eyes or hear it with their own ears."

Fang Yuan replied blandly.

He was, in fact, cursing to himself.

'Although I now have the facts and proof, the most important piece of the puzzle is still missing! I still need to find out about the effects of the Demonic Heart Realm!'

In truth, even if the Tantai family had failed in their duty and brought disaster upon the world, there would definitely be a solution to this problem.

The 'Door' was probably not the only door of its kind in this world. There must be other portals to the netherworld, or the Tantai family would never be able to deal with the overwhelming stream of souls passing through the 'Door'!

Also, it was not like Fang Yuan had never seen the common ghost before. Some of the other worlds were more in touch with the Dao and any random daoist on the streets could help spirits gain salvation. However, things were different in this world. Even the Imperial Advisor would not know what to do in this case.

'So...the netherworld has been altered? What exactly did Tantai Moye do?'

Fang Yuan thought to himself, then waved a hand at the Tantai clan leader.

"Alright, I'll be off. We will meet again!"

Fang Yuan knew that he had learnt everything that the Tantai family could tell him, and did not want to stay any longer.

"Wait!"

The Tantai clan leader had turned livid.

He had shared everything he knew with Fang Yuan because he had taken him for his word that he was a Tantai, and seemed like he did not know the true extent of his power. He had hoped to keep Fang Yuan by his side to aid the Tantai cause.

But now, Fang Yuan was throwing them off after getting the information that he wanted? What a joke!

"Lad, you dare defy the orders of the clan leader?"

The surrounding Tantai elders were infuriated as well.

"How impudent!"

"Psh!"

Fang Yuan could not be bothered by the commotion and rushed off like a bullet.

"Prepare the magical equipment!"

"No, he is human! The magical equipment only works on ghosts!"

"Ah! Such powerful skills. I have practised my Iron Sand Palm technique for 30 years and have not yet met my match. Today, I'll use it on you, haha. Take this....Ah! My hand!!!"

"Don't hit my face!"

....

Fang Yuan had forced his way out of the village by virtue of his superior skills in martial arts and did not even need to activate the spirits sealed up in his body.

As Fang Yuan rushed into the fog, his smile widened.

"The power of the curse feels so familiar... every time you open a new timeline for me, you give me an opportunity to understand you better so that I can break you eventually!"

Fang Yuan readied himself.

"Double curses! Superposition!"

Boom!

A strange fluctuation had begun to spread outwards. The fog had cleared up.

The surrounding space undulated and the ground became nothingness.

In this nothingness, Fang Yuan saw an 'origin' that was not

supposed to exist.

"Indeed, it is hidden inside the spacetime gap..."

Fang Yuan stretched out both of his arms and traced the singular locus as if he was grabbing at his destiny.

"Seal it!"

A swirl emerged from Fang Yuan's chest and sucked the existence of the spacetime gap into his body.

"Oh!"

In a blink, other than the explosiveness of the spacetime curse's power, sporadic pieces of memories were rushing at Fang Yuan's consciousness.

"Is this...the final recoil?"

Fang Yuan gritted his teeth and laughed coldly. Given his physical state, the explosion of this Strange level curse could not harm him at all.

What had troubled him was the information he had gleaned from the origin.

It was a purplish-black Green Bronze Door, and there were two ferocious ghosts guarding it. The image of a deadly spirit was embossed on it.

A man had walked up to the door with a look of determination on his face, and proceeded to push it open slowly...

Fang Yuan had watched this memory play in this head when he had first descended upon this world!

Chapter 536: Time

As he sealed up the curse, Fang Yuan also analysed the sporadic pieces of memories that assailed his senses.

The images flashing before his eyes tied in with the vision that he had seen when he had first crossed over to this world!

"No! There is more information..."

Fang Yuan's spiritual will surged and he could see that the scenes lying about in the sea of memories were ever-changing.

Time seemed to be backtracking in a strange manner and an image began to emerge steadily.

It was that of a purple comet with a dazzling crystalline body. It had a long flaming tail, and fell into the Purple Eye Realm without warning!

In other words, it had fallen right into the netherworld of the 'Inner World'!

Boom!

This chaotic and bizarre occurrence had changed the netherworld completely, and it was transformed into a twisted and evil high dimensional space.

At this point, a man appeared.

He was devilishly handsome and radiated extreme power. He also carried within him a strong sense of destiny.

"The netherworld has gone through a large change. As the strongest member of the Tantai family, I have to get to the bottom of the matter!"

Out of a vehement belief in his own abilities and intense love for his family, he broke the greatest law of all — passing through the 'Door' alive into the netherworld!

This man was...Tantai Moye!

Unfortunately, things did not turn out the way he wanted.

When he had first opened the Green Bronze Door with his mortal hands, a law had been broken simultaneously. The chaos and freakishness that had accumulated in the netherworld over the ages were released upon the world. A powerful curse was thus born!

"I will take on the sole responsibility for all that plagues the world, but the matter of the origin in the netherworld must be resolved!"

Determined, Tantai Moye fought his way through the netherworld, deep into the high dimensional space where the great purple crystalline body laid.

....

The vision ended there and then, but Fang Yuan could guess what happened next.

"This Tantai Moye... was a man destined for greatness. Perhaps he was representative of this world's attempt at rebellion?"

Evidently, Tantai Moye's efforts had come to nought in the end.

He had not only fallen in the netherworld, but his obsession with protecting his family and saving the world had morphed into a curse that had taken root in Ghost Sealing Village and eventually devastated the Tantai Family!

It was a huge irony, to say the least.

Not to mention that his actions were eventually misunderstood by his descendants, and his name had subsequently become taboo.

"Let me think..."

Fang Yuan's mind was whirring.

"From the beginning, it was the purple comet that crashed into

the netherworld and changed the nature of the place. That was how all the chaos and curses were born and bred. Was Tantai Moyer's birth the world's attempt at salvaging itself from the potential mess?"

The World's Will was a rigid entity. In the face of complex situations like these, it could only deal with them in this manner.

Unfortunately, in utilising human beings, there would always be human error.

Although Tantai Moyer grew in strength quickly, it was not enough to counter that origin in question.

Not only that, but he would have been exploited, and his opening of the 'Door' was akin to opening a Pandora's box of evil, a necessary step in cursing the Outer World!

"Firstly, it was the act of opening the 'Door' that subjected the Tantai family to the Curse of the Door. Next, Tantai Moyer's name itself gradually turned into an unspeakable curse... the survival of the Tantai family is truly miraculous!"

Fang Yuan clenched his fists.

"Now that I know what is behind that 'Door', I will deal with it!"

At this point, he had been expelled from the spacetime gap and had returned to the real world.

"It has been sealed up... my fourth curse!"

Fang Yuan muttered to himself.

This Strange Level curse was rooted in Tantai Moyer's strength and determination and had been distorted by the power of the purple crystalline body. It had become a freakish entity that was capable of manipulating time and space with its ferocious power!

The benefits Fang Yuan got out of sealing up the curse were excellent:

"Name: Fang Yuan (Tantai Mieming)

Essence: 50.0 (100)

Spirit: 50.0 (100)

Magic: 50.0 (100)

Profession: Exorcist

Techniques: Exorcism (Peak), Pharmacy (Peak), Eagle Claw Grappling Technique (Peak)

Skill: [Medicine (Level 3)], [Botany (Level 6)], [Fiery Golden Eyes (Level 1)], [Spirit Sealing Body (4th Grade)]

Spirit Sealing Body (3rd Grade): Your body is a weapon which is able to seal evil ghosts. You will be able to seal any ghost that you come into contact with into your body! You have activated the 4th Grade, and the capacity for sealing evil ghosts: 4! You can choose to release the ghost!"

"After this increase in my stats, will I still have the ability to manipulate spacetime?"

Fang Yuan released the seal slightly.

This unspeakable curse might be the strongest among the Strange Level curses, but only had a minimal effect on Fang Yuan when released. With that, his hair colour turned into a frosty silver.

"The fusing of the 3 Strange Level curses is almost complete!"

Fang Yuan was satisfied with his progress.

"In five years time, even if I only seal one per year, I will be able to seal up that purple crystalline body completely when the 20-year cycle comes round again!"

He strongly suspected that the purple crystalline body was something that a higher being left behind in this realm, which had been brought over from the Demonic Heart Realm.

Only something left behind by a higher being that defied laws of

nature could bring about such widespread desolation to the world.

"This is... Ghost Sealing Village?"

Fang Yuan looked around at the silent greenery and realised that the original village was in ruins.

After Fang Yuan dealt with the cyclical curse, the spirits in the village would have disappeared. The timeline would have also switched back to when he first arrived at the village.

"I wonder how Jiese and the rest are doing?"

Fang Yuan frowned. He had already resolved the curse and as long as they could hang in there up till that moment, they would be safe.

"Hmm? Who's that?"

Fang Yuan ran in pursuit of the disturbance.

In the village, what was once Madam Donghua's house had become a pile of rubble.

"Amitufo... do accept my condolences, Miss Ma. Mr Fang has sacrificed himself to break the curse in this village and has salvaged dozens of souls in the process. He would have accumulated much karma and must have ascended to the lands of paradise after his death!"

This was a familiar voice. It was definitely Jiese the Monk, but yet it sounded much deeper.

"No...I believe that Brother Fang Yuan wouldn't have died so easily. He must be trapped somewhere!"

This was another voice that Fang Yuan was familiar with as well. It was Ma Xiaoling.

'Why is she here? And...why is Jiese so certain that I'm dead?'

Fang Yuan was suspicious and chose not to appear there and then.

"I wish that was the case too. But I've spoken to many experts and they've all told me that since the curse is broken, all the survivors would definitely have returned by now.."

Jiese let out a sigh and took out the incense burner that he had prepared. He lit it up and then proceeded to recite the reincarnation mantras.

"No... no it can't be. It has only been 5 years!"

Taking a closer look, Fang Yuan realised that Ma Xiaoling had shed her adolescent appearance and had become a beautiful young woman.

"That fellow won't die so easily. I don't believe it, even if it had been 10 years, or even 50 years!"

"Sigh... foolish girl. 5 years without any news of him is definitely bad news... with him gone, many people are going to suffer..."

Jiese had finished chanting his mantras and sighed again.

"F... five years?!"

Alarm bells were ringing in Fang Yuan's mind.

"I was gone for 5 years?"

Fang Yuan calmed himself down and examined Jiese and Ma Xiaoling again. He finally knew why they looked so odd to him.

Jiese and Ma Xiaoling looked more mature now, it was as though they had aged 5 years overnight!

"Damn it!"

Fang Yuan understood now.

"It was that spacetime curse! Time was severely dilated in that spacetime gap and it was compounded by the sealing and digestion of that entity in the spacetime gap. Although I did not feel it, 5 years had gone by in the process! It must have been that curse's doing!"

That spacetime curse was unable to defeat him, but it had managed to steal five years of his life!

This was indeed a huge loss to Fang Yuan.

"Sigh... ever since Mr Fang passed on, curses have been activating all over the world. According to the information I have, the Tantai family is facing another 20-year cycle. Even Tantai Guihu could not escape this time. He has already departed for the Tantai residences and is preparing to enter the netherworld... there was a prophecy that if the Tantai family were to fall, true horror would befall the world! There would be hell on earth!"

"My generation of exorcists will do everything we can to brave the netherworld and resolve the crisis!"

A steely look of determination appeared on Jiese's face.

"If Mr Fang is watching over us in heaven, he will help us."

"You are right, monk. I do intend to help you!"

Fang Yuan had suddenly appeared behind the incense burner with a laugh.

Jiese immediately retreated back several yards and adopted a defensive stance.

"Hai! What kind of monster are you?"

"Ah!"

Ma Xiaoling screamed and threw the contents of a potion bottle towards Fang Yuan.

"I say..."

Fang Yuan waved his sleeves casually and deflected the potion from his body. He looked slightly annoyed.

"You don't believe that I'm dead and yet you throw potions at me upon seeing me. What do you want exactly?"

"Amitufo, are you human or are you a ghost?"

Jiese stood up ramrod straight and asked gingerly.

After all, Fang Yuan was very formidable back when he was still alive. If he were to be dead, he might have become a more frightening entity than the spacetime curse!

"Of course I'm human!"

Fang Yuan rolled his eyes.

"It was just that I spent quite a while in the spacetime gap dealing with the curse. Has it really been 5 years? Who are the other survivors?"

"Are you really Mr Fang?... Back then, I was dragged into another space and was forced to deal with countless of ghost swarms. I was so close to meeting the Buddha....."

Jiese was unsure of whether to believe Fang Yuan and decided to tell his story.

"Fortunately, the ghost swarms vanished at the last minute and I was taken back to my original position. Later, I met Tantai Guihu at the village entrance. By then, everyone else from the village had disappeared without a trace...For 3 months, the two of us stayed at where we were to wait for you, but to no avail. Finally, we gave up and left."

Chapter 537: The Netherworld

"Afterwards... I've also got a few fortune tellers and all of them had confirmed your death... I only accepted this fact after 3 years!"

Jiese the Monk explained.

"Fortune telling..."

Fang Yuan smirked. Looking at his Spirit Sealing Body, if the 4 curses in him were not considered inauspicious, what could possibly be?

No matter how powerful or revered the fortune tellers were, it would be almost impossible for them to predict Fang Yuan's predicament.

After sealing the 4th curse, Fang Yuan now had the ability to 'detect his name'. That is, within a certain area, if anyone were to speak about him or anything which he had cursed, he would be alerted and be promptly apprised with the conversation! He could then strengthen the curse if he wished to do so!

Such an ability would make him no different from a god!

If Fang Yuan was willing, he could easily turn his name into a spoken curse to kill those who had heard of it before.

"Strange Level curses have unique and unparalleled abilities..."

Fang Yuan took a quick shutoeye and a scene started to appear in his imagination.

It was a creepy looking front yard. Tantai Guijing and Tantai Juexin were all there and appeared frail. "If Tantai Mieming is still not around, I'm afraid none of us will be able to survive the next incoming 20-year cycle..."

The imagery stopped. Fang Yuan could only continue to watch on if he decided to curse them with his curse.

'The power of a curse... It's too strong. To be able to distort

spacetime, search for souls, control the spread of information and sense such things... This sounds like a god in the legends indeed...'

Fang Yuan silently thought to himself but on the surface, he continued to probe further. "Does this mean that in that expedition 5 years ago, the Chen siblings are confirmed to be dead?"

"That's right!"

Jiese the Monk nodded his head solemnly. "I've gathered this accurate information."

Fang Yuan nodded his head but did not respond.

To speak the truth, they were fortunate enough to have 3 survivors after being plagued by a Strange Level curse.

Of course, Fang Yuan speculated that if he did not find the source of the curse so quickly, Tantai Guihu and Jiese the Monk would not have survived too.

...

"According to you, the 20-year cycle is about to repeat itself once more?"

After understanding all that had happened in the past 5 years, Fang Yuan continued to gather more information from Jiese the Monk.

"That's right!" Jiese the Monk placed his palms together. "Furthermore... This time, the curse seems to be much more dangerous. Even Tantai Guihu took the initiative to enter the Netherworld. There's a prophecy that as soon as the bloodline of the Tantai Family stops, calamity will strike the world!"

"Although I don't really believe in that, since this is so, I shall take a look in the Netherworld for myself!"

Fang Yuan rubbed his own chest.

His Tantai blood started to surge in him as he began to feel excited.

'Indeed... the cycle is about to repeat itself once more!'

Fang Yuan's eyes glistened with excitement. "20 years ago, I've run away from home. I wonder how the Tantai Family is now!"

Regardless, Fang Yuan knew for himself that he was powerful! Very powerful! He was more powerful than any being in this world.

Even so, Fang Yuan still did not feel confident about dealing with the Green Bronze Door and the source of all these troubles.

"Jiese the Monk... Bring Xiaoling with you!"

Fang Yuan tilted his head and was deep in his thoughts. "I shall enter the Netherworld now!"

The Netherworld he was speaking of was the core of the real world, fused with all the darkness that ever existed in the world!

To many, it was an arduous task to enter the Netherworld. However, to Fang Yuan, who had the ability to traverse spacetime, it was an easy task.

Furthermore, by entering from the Ghost Sealing Spirit, it might possibly be even easier than usual.

"Amitufo! Don't worry!"

Jiese the Monk nodded his head.

"Noooo!"

Hearing this, Ma Xiaoling shook her head in disagreement. "I want to follow you!"

"Be good! Listen!"

A red glow flashed across Fang Yuan's eyes and Ma Xiaoling fell into a trance.

Even though she had trained hard and had become an elite exorcist, she was still nothing in front of Fang Yuan.

"Your actions are out of goodwill but it is a little too..."

Jiese the Monk shook his head and seemed speechless.

"Monk, take my advice. You don't have to enter the Netherworld. The teachings of the Golden Mountain Monastery cannot end at your generation..."

Fang Yuan smiled and paid no attention to Ma Xiaoling. Instead, he continued to advise Jiese the Monk. "Furthermore... since all of you are not top-notch exorcists, you will only burden me if you follow me. Wait for my good news here!"

Fang Yuan was busy calculating his odds of being able to successfully deal with the unknown in the Netherworld.

"3 Strange Level curses... they should be enough!"

Previously, the Icy Zombie itself was powerful enough to stall time against the curse of the Green Bronze Door.

Now, with the combined power of the 3 Strange Level curses, Fang Yuan had the ability to go head-on against the curse of the Green Bronze Door. With such a foundation, it would be much more convenient for Fang Yuan to do whatever he wanted to.

"As long as I can touch the purple crystals, I will be confident of sealing it..."

Fang Yuan started to mumble to himself. "Of course... If those purple crystals are the source of all these, then the final curse will not be the Wuyin level which I have predicted, because it ultimately has a source!"

"Amitufo!"

Jiese the Monk was clueless about Fang Yuan's thoughts. He could only force a smile after hearing Fang Yuan's rude comment. "I shall escort Miss Ma back and wait for your good news!"

Although Jiese the Monk knew that he was rather powerful, after the few occasions of combining forces with Fang Yuan on their expeditions to deal with ghosts and curses, he no longer had the

pride and self-esteem. He knew that Fang Yuan was chasing them away out of goodwill.

"Alright!"

Gazing at the silhouette of Jiese the Monk and Ma Xiaoling, Fang Yuan took another look at Ghost Sealing Village and remained silent.

"The door to the Netherworld exists in the overworld all along! Furthermore... it lies in Ghost Sealing Village!"

According to his memories, he promptly made his way to an open square in the village.

"Last time... Tantai Moye broke the promise and entered the Netherworld with his mortal body. With that, he created chaos in the overworld and resulted in the occurrence of curses... From then on, the door to the Netherworld had changed and disappeared from sight... At the same time, it had left behind a curse on the descendants of the Tantai Family!"

As Fang Yuan casually strolled in the square, a golden hue flashed in his eyes. "Previously, the door had disappeared from here... Entering the Netherworld from this point will make things easier. I might be able to gather a clue about that door at the same time!"

Ghost Sealing Village was obviously a connection between the Netherworld and the overworld. In here, the spacetime gap between the two worlds was at its minimum. If not for this fact, the door of the Netherworld would not have existed here previously in the first place.

Fang Yuan was prepared to take the shortest route to see if he could rush and make it in time for the final battle!

"At most, I would fall into a void.... Powerful ghosts all have this ability! Furthermore, the Netherworld has become more accessible with the appearance of curses."

Fang Yuan's hair turned silver and the space around him started

to vibrate. In an instant, holes started to appear and spread around him as though space was corroding.

The holes merged together to form a huge glow, engulfing him in within.

With that, Fang Yuan could detect the arrival of the Netherworld's spiritual aura!

...

In the Netherworld.

Within a dark valley, an ancient looking mansion stood tall.

Around the mansion were many black flowers in full bloom. They were growing in odd shapes but had a mystical aroma.

Outside the mansion, a stream of light was flowing calmly.

On closer inspection, one would realise that the glowing entities in the stream of light were spirits dressed in white!

They were all emotionless and there were more than a billion of them. This scene was a suffocating one.

"20 years is about to be up!"

In the mansion, Tantai Guijing held a black crutch and sighed.

He as skinny as a pile of bones wrapped in skin. With his white beard drifting through the wind, there were flames of passion burning in his eyes. "Did Tantai Juelie fail again?"

"That's right... From his Soul Lantern, his fire is about to be extinguished. He should be dead!"

Tantai Juexin spoke softly. He slung a dagger by his waist.

The elders of the Tantai Family appeared frail looking and there were only about 7 to 8 of them left.

All of them seemed to be in bad condition.

"The Netherworld... the home of the dead spirits!"

Tantai Guijing chuckled. "Forget it... Let it come once more!"

The elders seemed indifferent. All of them had a rotting stench coming from them and they seemed as though they couldn't care less about the curse of the 'Door'.

"Father... We still have a chance. We can escape from the Netherworld and return to the overworld!"

Tantai Juexin clenched his teeth.

He knew what laid in the Netherworld!

Poisonous river water, bone-chilling air and all sorts of weird plants, coupled with spirits all around! All of these would be a living hell to a human!

If not for the strong and hardy bloodline of the Tantai Family and the fact that they had supplemented themselves with food and clean water from the surroundings, the entire Tantai Family would have been dead.

Even so, living here for 20 years had already resulted in changes to their bodies. None of them would consider themselves alive.

"Escape?"

Tantai Guijing coughed and his voice turned hoarse. "It's useless... I've used the 'mirror' to take a peek into the future. The outcome of this cycle would be catastrophic. In fact, none of us might make it out of here alive!"

"The outcome of the 20-year cycle..."

All of them remained silent.

In the Netherworld, they had to go through industrial processes to purify and disinfect their food and water. The only real terror here was still the curse of the 'Door'!

Initially, the Tantai Family's worst experience was the first few days after arriving in the Netherworld.

Now, 20 years had passed in the blink of an eye.

The real terror was about to arrive!

"Reporting! Elders, elders!"

At this point in time, a member of the Tantai Family hurriedly rushed in. "There's a trace of an..... Exorcist!"

Chapter 538: The Current Situation

"Finally... I've returned..."

Tantai Guihu looked up towards the Tantai Mansion and was overwhelmed with emotions.

Although it was no longer on the original piece of land it once stood on, the mansion was still the same old one. Within moments, his mind was filled with memories of his childhood.

"Daoist, is this the Tantai Mansion?"

Beside him stood a daoist and a monk.

The daoist appeared well-groomed and his long beard swayed in the wind. Draped in a daoist robe, his energetic outlook made him seem like a deity.

On the contrary, the monk standing next to him was skinny and had a sorrowful look on his face. He was wearing black monk robes.

The daoist was Sanmu while the Monk was Kuhai. Both of them were top exorcists in the trade and were recruited by Tantai Guijing to enter the Netherworld.

It was not the most accurate to say that Tantai Guijing had recruited them. They themselves had also sensed the seemingly approaching doomsday and had taken the initiative to help Tantai Guihu.

"We've long heard that the Tantai Family was the most prominent among the exorcists... Never would I have thought that I would see the actual mansion of the family... in the Netherworld..."

Master Kuhai gazed at the mansion and remained emotionless.

Hearing this, Tantai Guihu felt a tinge of regret but did not respond.

It was almost an impossible task for living humans to enter the Netherworld and there had been no cases of humans leaving the Netherworld alive in history. Therefore, the exorcists who dared to enter the Netherworld had already resigned to their fate.

"Clang!"

At this moment, the door of the Tantai Mansion opened. Tantai Guijing and a group of elders walked out to invite them.

"It's Daoist Sanmu and Master Kuhai!"

It seemed that Tantai Guijing recognised these two exorcists. As soon as he noticed Tantai Guihu, he grunted.

"Brother!"

Tantai Guihu walked up and called out softly. He was wearing his mask and therefore, not many of them could recognise him.

"Hehe... My greetings to you, family head!"

Daoist Sanmu paid his respects. "20 years had gone by just like this. It is our fate to be able to meet here today..."

The Netherworld was too huge. Even though the 3 of them had attempted to enter the Netherworld from the location where the Tantai Mansion once stood and had made use of Tantai Guihu's bloodline to search for the mansion, they were lucky to complete the treacherous journey to the actual mansion.

"Amitufo!"

Master Kuhai maintained his sorrowful look even when greeting others. "The both of us have come here because Deity Yigua had made a prediction... If the bloodline of the Tantai Family were to disappear from the real world, the entire world will be destroyed!"

"Deity Yigua? That quack?"

Tantai Guijing scoffed as though he had a grudge against this person. "Why don't he predict his own life? Hasn't he died yet? How's he doing?"

"After making that prediction, he had died of exhaustion!"

Daoist Sanmu calmly reported.

"Dead?"

Tantai Guijing seemed stunned. "Our generation is slowly dying off... Did the both of you make the trip here just because of this prediction?"

"A few hundred years ago, the entire realm changed and was being cursed. We must put an end to this!"

Master Kuhai spoke with a monotonous tone.

With their seniority, they already understood most of what had happened to the realm and were extremely close to finding out the truth.

"Even so... Why did you let him come back?"

Tantai Guijing glared at Tantai Guihu. "If we allow the Tantai bloodline to remain out there and if we survive through this time, wouldn't the prediction be false?"

"It will be good if everything is so simple!"

Tantai Guihu sighed and stretched his right hand out before rolling up his sleeves.

On his arm, a dark palm print could be clearly seen.

"I have an ominous feeling... This curse will not let any member of the Tantai Family go! Furthermore, by staying in the overworld, we will be scrutinised, just like what I experienced... I've been attacked once in the overworld. Even with Master Kuhai and Daoist Sanmu's help, I only barely escaped! On the other hand, after entering the Netherworld, I feel less watched..."

He concluded with a deep voice. "Therefore... We might stand a chance if we directly go against the curse. If we try to escape, we would undoubtedly die!"

"Is the Tantai Family bloodline... really going to end here?"

Tantai Guijing shut his eyes and the entire mansion was filled with desolation.

This cycle was very different from the previous few! It was targeted at every single descendant of the Tantai Family!

Tantai Guijing could vaguely sense that ever since their ancestor had made the mistake resulting in the curse, the entire world seemed to have entered a different phase!

Regardless of the future of the world, the Tantai Family would not be fated to be part of it.

As the both of them were at their wit's end, none of them had recalled that there was still the existence of the mutant-like Fang Yuan.

To Fang Yuan, in his current state, other than the Curse of the Door, any curse which could traverse space could do nothing against him. He was untouchable.

However, since Fang Yuan promised to return, he would deliver his promise and return.

After all, he knew that he was not totally helpless against the final curse.

"Right, since the three of you have come from the overworld, have any of you gotten news of Tantai Mieming?"

Tantai Juexin walked up and looked towards his uncle, who was around the same age as him.

"Tantai Mieming?"

With this, Tantai Guihi was stunned before nodding his head. "I've seen him! He is indeed a talent! Unfortunately... He had already died under the curse."

"Died?"

Tantai Guijing and Tantai Juexin exchanged looks and shook their heads. "It's impossible!"

"I've asked Deity Yigua about this. He was facing a huge calamity... At that time, he was trapped in a time loop for many years..."

Tantai Guihu felt a little confused. As he spoke, his expression slowly changed. "Wait a minute... could it be... the family's Soul Lantern?"

"Hehe... He is such an important member of the family! How could we not make a Soul Lantern for him?"

One of the elders interrupted. "His Soul Lantern is still burning brilliantly and shows no sign of being extinguished. It seems that this evil boy is still alive in the world!"

Every single one of them in the Tantai Family had the right to feel a grudge for Fang Yuan.

After all, to them, they had 'created' Fang Yuan!

However, at their weakest moment where did needed all the help they could get, Fang Yuan had betrayed them. He had betrayed his own family!

If the Tantai Family hated Tantai Guihu with a score of 10, then they would hate Fang Yuan with a score of 100! Or even more! Nothing could ever make them forget the grudge.

"If this is true, then Fang Yuan is still alive!"

Tantai Guihu was jubilant. "Considering his personality, he will surely take the initiative to enter the Netherworld. We have hope!"

"Has that brat become that powerful?"

Hearing Tantai Guihu, Tantai Guijing's eyes glistened.

On the other hand, the other elders were raging. "D*mn it... Fang Yuan! He doesn't even want his own surname! This person is guilty of betraying his family! The next time we see him, we shall take

him under control and use him to shield against the Door!"

Although they could not stop scolding him, all of the elders started to sound more energetic.

After all, they had entered the Netherworld 20 years ago and the ones with weaker willpower had already died or committed suicide. The remaining ones would do anything they could do to survive.

Only Tantai Juexin felt conflicted among all of them.

By now, it seemed like the fate of the entire family was in Fang Yuan's hands!

"Alright, please come in!"

Tantai Guijing was all smiles as he invited both Daoist Sanmu and Master Kuhai into the mansion. He also seemed to have forgiven Tantai Guihu.

After all, the members of the Tantai Family had to stand united if they wanted to survive. They could not afford to have any more internal conflicts.

"Prepare some meat and drinks and serve the guests!"

As soon as they entered the main hall, Tantai Guijing hobbled around with his crutches and members of the Tantai Family started to serve trays of food and drinks.

"There is still food... in the Netherworld?"

Tantai Guihu, Daoist Sanmu and Master Kuhai had a tough journey before they arrived here and their rations were almost depleted by now.

Seeing the food on the trays, they could not hold back any longer and started to feast.

"Although the Netherworld is a restricted place to living humans and is filled with ghosts and curses, we are fortunate enough to have the protection of this mansion. It is able to protect us just

enough for us to survive... This meat is from the White Bone Bird. Only a small amount of meat is edible from a single bird. As for the water, the water from the rivers in the Netherworld is not potable. This water is purified from a poisonous spring nearby and is also extremely scarce..."

Tantai Guijing smiled as he introduced the food and drinks that were served.

As for Tantai Guihu, he felt a little uncomfortable to eat as he noticed the many pairs of eyes glaring at him.

Years ago, they had sacrificed many members of the Tantai Family in the process of testing if the food and drinks were edible.

"Initially... We have stored these reserves for almost half a year already as we prepare to tide through the disaster seasons of the Netherworld... But now, it seems like there is no need for it any more."

Tantai Juexin commented.

The Netherworld had harsh environmental conditions and normal humans would find it hard to even survive. Occasionally, they would even be black hurricanes which would destroy almost everything in its path.

Facing such situations, even the Tantai Family could do nothing else but stock up on food supplies and rely on their hardy mansion to forcefully tide through it.

"Sigh..."

Tantai Guihu let out a long sigh.

After knowing all the hardships his family had gone through all these years, he felt bad. "After spending 20 over years here, have you found traces of the 'Door'?"

As soon as he mentioned the Door, every single member of the Tantai Family started to appear solemn.

"We've found it..."

Tantai Guihu's voice became hoarse. "But... It's not appropriate to say that we've found it. This is because we were not the ones to find it. Instead, it had taken the initiative to find us!"

"Oh? Where is it?"

Tantai Guihu was shaken.

"Within the deep parts of this valley..."

Tantai Guijing started to seem uneasy as he struggled to smile. "In fact... In the past 20 years, we've benefited from it! If not for the fact that it had deterred the ghosts, the Tantai Mansion would have been overwhelmed by ghost swarms!"

"This is impossible..."

Tantai Guihu was in shock.

How could the Green Bronze Door help them if it had cursed the family all this while? This was a joke!

Chapter 539: Appearance

"You are saying that... the 'Door' is protecting us?"

Tantai Guihu looked at Tantai Guijing incredulously.

"Back then...the whole Tantai residence had been afflicted by the curse and was pulled down to the netherworld. It fell directly to somewhere near the Green Bronze Door and was met with the curse over there!"

Tantai Guijing went on composedly.

"Although many in the Tantai family have died, everything will go back to normal when the day comes...anyway, with the existence of the Green Bronze Door, no ghost swarm or powerful spirit would dare to come anywhere close to this valley. It protects us. Of course, no Tantai would dare to approach the Door either. Those who have tried are now dead!"

"In my opinion, the 'Door' did not save us. We are but the sacrificial animals it has chosen, or the prey that it has rounded in. Hence, it will not allow any other 'predators' to come close..."

"The whole Tantai family, are....sacrificial animals?"

Tantai Guihu's voice was quivering with resentment.

"All this...it is all because of the Curse of the Door! And the rash actions of our ancestor..."

Tantai Guijing shook his head. He still had no idea of the truth about Tantai Moye!

"No matter what...we must face this curse! That Green Bronze Door... can it be destroyed?"

Tantai Guihu gritted his teeth.

"Of course we've tried it before. Unfortunately, all the elders who have approached the Door triggered the curse and combusted spontaneously... the area deep within the valley is now restricted

to all of us."

Tantai Juexin shook his head.

"If only that person was still alive..."

He thought about the last 20-year cycle and about how it was Tantai Mieming who managed to damage the Green Bronze Door, giving them valuable time to recharge their strength. If he was still around, they would no doubt have a chance at succeeding.

"Immeasurable heavens!"

The Daoist Sanmi and Master Kuhai had heard of Fang Yuan too. As they looked around at the bewildered faces of the Tantai elders, they did not know what to feel.

This Tantai Mieming was more remarkable than they had expected!

At the moment, however, they were stuck in a difficult situation.

They did not know whether they should gather all of their forces and mount an assault on the Green Bronze Door, or defend passively and await reinforcements.

Unfortunately, even with the protection of the Curse of the Door, they could not guarantee that Tantai Mieming would return in time or at all.

"We are 3 days away from the activation of the curse! We can only wait till then!"

Finally, it was Tantai Guijing who spoke up definitively.

"If Tantai Mieming still cares about us, he will return!"

Looking at him now, one would have thought that he was an elder who cared about the welfare of the younger generation. No one would have guessed that he had callously employed his own grandchild as a tool back then.

"Knock knock!"

At this moment, dull knocks suddenly rang out. The sound struck deep into everyone's chest cavities and everyone could feel their hearts pounding with every blow.

"It's...it's that 'Door'!"

A Tantai elder announced in a quavering voice.

"It...has come!"

"How is that possible? It isn't time yet..."

Tantai Guijing and the rest walked out into the yard and saw the image of a huge door flickering over the horizon. They were all at a loss for words.

When the curse had activated back then, it had left a deep impression on them.

At that point, the netherworld was the home ground of the opposing forces. Without Tantai Mieming to restrain them, they were more powerful than ever!

"Juexin, open the temple!"

Tantai Guijing gritted his teeth.

"We'll fight!"

"Yes, sir!"

Tantai Juexin sped towards the temple purposefully.

There were two important buildings in the rear premises of the Tantai residence. One was the sacrificial hall and the other one was the temple.

The sacrificial hall was where the Tantaïs sealed up objects and worshipped supernatural beings while the temple was a resting place for the Tantai ancestors, many of whom were elite exorcists!

The temple had defence mechanisms guarding it and Tantai Juexin took out a piece of jade which ensured his safe entry.

When he pushed open the door, rows upon rows of memorial

tablets greeted him.

Behind the memorial tablets laid a hidden chamber.

Tantai Juexin took a deep breath and entered the place just as he had many times before.

It was a gloomy space peppered with the dim glows of spirit lamps. They illuminated the place like millions of fireflies.

Rows of figures sat upon armchairs and stared down sternly from their positions on the altar.

"My forefathers!"

Tantai Juexin fell to the ground and kowtowed unhesitantly.

"Your descendant Tantai Juexin prays for your help!"

These seated figures were the ancestors of the Tantai family, some of them from the time of the migration. The founders of the Tantai residence were all skilled exorcists and were highly cultivated. Even in death, their bodies did not decompose nor reek.

After doing his bow, Tantai Juexin got to feet and looked at the magical equipment lying on the altar.

'The ancestors are long gone and have no interest in our prayers...but rituals have to be observed anyway...'

As Tantai Juexin caressed the magical equipment, he felt as though his ancestors had turned their heads and were now staring at him.

"As long as they did not die as a result of being cursed, the ancestors would come here to pass away...this would allow them to consolidate their cultivation and spiritual will such that a powerful curse is created... this is the final asset of the Tantai family! A slight divergence back then had created Tantai Mieming!"

A slight divergence had created a Strange Level curse. If Fang Yuan found out about this, he would take a great interest in this place.

Nevertheless, he was too young back then and given the naturally guarded behaviour of Tantai family members, he would not have found out much.

In truth, this was a source of sorrow for the Tantai family too!

To deal with the curses and ghosts, they were forced to create curses of their own in order to pass on their powers to their descendants so that they at least had a fighting chance.

"Right now... this can't wait anymore!"

Tantai Guihu gritted his teeth and picked up a little bronze knife and a magical bell from the altar.

Woowoo!

As he held onto these two tools, Tantai Juexin saw an ocean of blood before his eyes. He was experiencing a vivid illusion.

Dozens of hands were grabbing onto the tools he held and transmitting power to them.

"This is truly the ultimate weapon of the Tantai family! The power it has is unrivalled by any other magical tool!"

As Tantai Juexin held onto the bronze knife, he suddenly understood how to utilise it. When he took a swipe at the air in front of him, a wormhole appeared.

Tantai Juexin stepped in unflinchingly.

Boom!

His surroundings changed.

The many Tantai elders were combating the great flickering vision of the Door with their skills in exorcism.

What a door it was.

A great door cast in bronze, it was a peculiar purplish-black in colour. On its sides were two huge ghostly figures guarding it.

Key to its appearance was the vivid and intricate carvings

embossed on it. They were of the many Tantai family members who had been killed by the curse, and their souls had been trapped by the Door.

This was the embodiment of generations of Tantai sweat and tears, and now, it was biting them back.

Even Tantai Guihu could not control his emotions upon seeing the Door before him.

Gash!

The mask with a crack on its face that Tantai Guihu was wearing suddenly split apart and fell to the ground. Fresh blood oozed out from its remains.

Tantai Guihu screamed. He had been disfigured.

"Impossible...the ghost mask could withstand the force of the spacetime curse...why did it fall apart this easily?"

Tantai Guihu slashed open his palm and subsequently understood the difficulties of dealing with the Door.

"This is only an image of the Door...how would we possibly deal with the real Door?"

Buzz!

The Green Bronze Door let out a roar as the two ghostly figures began to open it. A strange sound split the air.

As the sound waves hit them, some of the Tantai family members grabbed at their necks as their blood vessels exploded. They had become profusely bleeding corpses.

Simultaneously, wispy figures rose from their bodies and rushed collectively into the Green Bronze Door.

As the Tantai people died, one could see that more carvings of figures with bloody tears had been added to the Door.

"Immeasurable heavens!"

"Amitufo!"

In this critical moment, the daoist and the monk joined forces. A bolt of light rushed up into the skies.

Purple symbols appeared in the void and entered the bodies of everyone present. The effects were beneficial to them.

"It is the most powerful curse indeed!"

Even though they had deflected the blow for the time being, Daoist Sanmu and Master Kuhai were troubled.

"Dealing with the Door already creates this much trouble. What about the things that lie behind the door?"

"Set!"

Tantai Guihu had acted as well. The image of a mirror materialised and gave off a fiery light that enveloped the Door.

In this light, the flickering image of the Door seemed to solidify.

The real Green Bronze Door had appeared!

This was the first thing that Tantai Juexin saw as he rushed over.

"Help me, my forefathers. Slash!"

Without hesitation, the bronze knife in his hands flew out and turned into a ray of light. Bringing with it the strength and conviction of a kamikaze warrior, it embedded itself firmly into the Door.

"The generations of Tantai blood tears, and all that I am burdened with, is because of you!"

Blood flowed out of Tantai Juexin's nose and mouth. Wielding the bronze knife had not been an easy feat. Still, he was intent on resolving everything today!

No matter how terrifying the curse might be, it would be a victory for the Tantai family if they even managed to damage the

Door slightly.

Then.

Bang!!!

Chapter 540: Pinpointing

Pinpointing

The crisp ring seemed to carry with it the wails of a thousand ghosts.

Sparks flew.

The bronze knife exploded into rays of light that shot out in all directions.

A deep gash slowly appeared on the Green Bronze Door.

"Success!"

Tantai Juexin clasped his hands firmly.

He had given his all in order to deal this blow. So what if he was on the verge of dying from exhaustion and had lost a powerful magical weapon in the process?

They had managed to inflict damage on the Door, which meant that it was entirely possible to destroy it!

Ding Ring Ring!

Tantai Juexin took out another magical tool: the magical bell.

The loud and clear rings of the bell had a healing effect. Everyone found themselves regaining energy. Before long, most of them had their health restored.

Pale white figures suddenly appeared. All of them dull expressions on their face, and looked like the preserved corpses of the Tantai ancestors in the hidden chamber.

This was a curse that the Tantai family had been breeding for countless years through the generations with great effort. A curse that targeted the Green Bronze Door!

At that very moment.

The two ghostly figures guarding the Green Bronze Door had

opened it slightly. They began to shriek again.

A distorted and savage force field began to expand. In no time, the entire sky had become greyish white.

"The power of this curse..."

Every living human being in the vicinity had become hurt. The curse was attacking their bodies viciously.

A dark red liquid gushed from the area surrounding the gash on the Green Bronze Door. It was like the blood of Green Bronze Door and the liquid patched up the gash as it flowed. The Door was whole again.

The Tantai ancestors who had been summoned lined up with blank looks on their faces and walked up to the Green Bronze Door. One by one, they entered.

Witnessing this sight had devastated Tantai Juexin and Tantai Guihu.

"This curse...this curse..."

Humans beings were not strong enough to challenge ghosts.

Thus, the Tantai family had created this ungodly curse against all odds and turned the elite exorcists into malevolent ghosts temporarily in the hopes that they could destroy the Green Bronze Door.

But this development had shown that the opposing forces were able to counter the curse devised by the Tantais!

This Green Bronze Door was perhaps the source of all curses!

To fight a curse with another curse was an impossible venture! It was like using a meat bun to hit a dog, defeating its purpose!

Buzz!

The Green Bronze Door let out another roar and became bigger every time it swallowed up the malevolent ghost of a Tantai

ancestor. It gradually attained the size of a mountain and looked like a pillar between heaven and earth.

"The Door...it grew by leeching off the Tantai bloodline...Tantai ghosts are even more beneficial to it!"

Tantai Guihu's blood ran cold.

'What if...this decision by the Tantaïs played right into the door's hands?! Could all those years of sacrifice and struggle be in vain?'

He was usually a cold-hearted man, but now, he could not help but be despondent.

He had become even more mortified by the Door. It had played a psychological game with the Tantai family and had bewitched them such that the family had become its accomplices!

Despair...was impending!

Knock knock!

Knock knock!

Knocking sounds rang out again. Tantai family members fell to the ground with every knock.

"The purge has begun! Haha..."

Tantai Guijing laughed out loud and the mirror in his hand smashed to pieces.

"If that is the case...you can have my old bones too!"

He seemed to have a fervent death wish and sped towards the Green Bronze Door.

Bang!

"Dad!"

"Mr Guijing!"

The Daoist Sanmu and Master Kuhai were both shocked.

Suddenly, a dark shadow flitted by and Tantai Guijing was

thrown backwards forcefully. A new figure had appeared.

"Seems like...I made it just in time!"

Fang Yuan scanned his surroundings. His black robes flapped about in the wind and his hair was silvery-white.

In a short time, the Tantai family members had mostly regained consciousness and found that the effects of the curse on their bodies were wearing off.

"You are...Mieming?"

Tantai Guijing's stared at Fang Yuan with his clouded eyes. Suddenly, they gleamed.

"Tantai Mieming?!"

"Is he really back?"

The Tantai family members were all experiencing mixed emotions, especially Tantai Juexin.

"Amitufo...it's Mr Tantai Mieming!"

Master Kuhai and Daoist Sanmu were elated.

"Guihu has told me a lot about you..."

"I have an announcement to make. I have changed my name to Fang Yuan. From today onwards, I will have nothing to do with the Tantai family..."

Fang Yuan gave a wide smile, revealing his gleaming white teeth.

He had rushed here only for the sake of fulfilling the promise he had made before.

"When I break the Curse of the Door for you people, I will cut my ties with the Tantai family and leave this all behind!"

"Cut your ties with us?"

Tantai Juexin looked aggrieved and nodded slowly.

"So be it..."

In his heart, he did not believe that this fellow could deal with the Curse of the Door.

After all, the counter-curse of the Tantai family and their two prized magical weapons had been soundly defeated by the Door!

"This curse was a splinter from the Tantai curse and has taken on a physical form..."

Tantai Juexin looked on as Fang Yuan strolled towards the Green Bronze Door and felt a great pressure coming down on him. He was unable to move.

"Against the reincarnation curse, I'm afraid that...."

"Juexin..."

Tantai Guihu let out a sigh.

"Let me tell you this now...Something had happened during the cursed ritual back then. That curse might have succeeded, but it might also have failed..."

"What?"

Tantai Juexin's expression changed.

"If that's the case...then he..."

He shook his head.

"Whatever the case, Suxin will never forgive me."

Knock knock!

Knock knock!

Following Fang Yuan's arrival, the knocking sounds from the Green Bronze Door became more frenzied.

The Tantai family members felt their bodies go soft and they all fell to the ground once more.

Even Daoist Sanmu and Master Kuhai were struggling hard to resist the curse and looked as if they had one foot in the grave.

"We finally meet the original Door in the netherworld!"

Fang Yuan pressed his hands together and a strange power radiated outwards. He had full control of his immediate surroundings and had cut off all of the Green Bronze Door's possible escape routes.

"You are the thoroughfare between life and death, the passageway for spirits...you are a gift from heaven to earth, untainted by the Inner World!

By right, the Door guarded by the Tantai family was not an evil object, but a core entity of the world!

When the purple comet had crashed down onto the earth, the whole Inner World was thrown into chaos. It was the 'Door' that kept the mess from spreading to the Outer World.

However, everything changed after Tantai Moye has broken the rules. From the moment a living man barged into the netherworld, the world would never be the same again!

Curses had streamed endlessly into the Outer World, bringing along with them all the hatred, fear and bloodlust that would gradually befoul the Door.

The Door eventually fell to the netherworld and its nature was changed forever!

"If Tantai Moye had been able to destroy the purple crystal, he would have been worshipped as a martyr even if the evil forces had seeped out into the world! But he had failed! Not only that, but his gamble had resulted in dire consequences...thus, it would not be unfair to blame him for the curse afflicting the Tantai bloodline!

Fang Tuan strode towards the Green Bronze Door.

The Door roared on and its shape kept on flickering. It was...trying to escape?

"You are no longer the original Door, and it is impossible for you

to escape my grasp!"

Fang Yuan said as a matter-of-factly and proceeded to step forward.

Boom!

The Door reverted back to its solid form.

"Woowooo!"

Numerous ghosts crying tears of blood surfaced from the Door. They were all dead Tantaïs and surged collectively towards Fang Yuan.

The two ghostly guards opened up their jaws and let out unholy screams.

"Hmph!"

Fang Yuan stretched his fingers.

Zoom!

The world went quiet, and the power of fire and ice was unleashed.

The Tantai ghosts barely had enough time to put on stunned expressions before they were incinerated by Fang Yuan's curse.

"Impossible..."

"This Door..."

"It can't be real..."

Tantai Juexin and company had their mouths agape as they watched Fang Yuan mow down the ghosts of the Green Bronze Door. They were all dumbfounded.

"Maybe...we were all wrong!"

Tantai Guijing sighed for the umpteenth time with a fiery look in his eyes.

"Back then...if only we had treated him with more sincerity and

given him 20 years, he would definitely be much more powerful than he is now. Mieming...he is the one real hope of the Tantai family!"

Daoist Sanmu and Master Kuhai rolled their eyes.

If only.

Dong!

The Green Bronze Door shook violently and the power of another one of its curses diffused outwards in black ripples.

Even the top exorcists would have their flesh and bones melted down and die horribly within a hundred metre radius of this curse.

Fang Yuan, however, was unfazed.

After the storm of fire and ice that Fang Yuan had unleashed, the Green Bronze Door was frozen firmly to the spot together with its two ghostly guards.

"I understand now..."

Standing in front of the Door, Fang Yuan could feel a dense and familiar power lurking behind. He let out another sighed as he comprehended even more.

"So that purple crystal did come from a higher power originating from the Demonic Heart Realm. Its radiation alone is able to wreak havoc in the netherworld....however, a higher power can only exist in a higher plane. When Tantai Moye had opened the Door and let out the curses from within, the Door was tainted in the process and transformed into a protective shield for the purple crystal instead...from the Purple Eye Realm, a higher dimensional world of the same level as the Outer World was born! To become a power bearer!"

This was not a spatial illusion conjured up by a ghost, but an entire world!

"A little dose of energy radiated energy could achieve this?"

Fang Yuan looked towards the great Door, his eyes gleaming.

Chapter 541: Origin

"Is the thing behind the Door...finally going to mature?"

Fang Yuan stood before the Green Bronze Door, deep in thought.

Obviously, the change that the purple crystal had brought to the netherworld was only the beginning.

Tantai Moye's act which propagated the curses to the Outer World was only part of the process.

But right now, the end was here!

In other words, the contamination and transformation of the world had reached a threshold!

"So...this is why the harvesting this time was so violent?"

"To be able to alter the world using its own strength..."

"If it had succeeded, the world would be plunged into an abyss of fear and sink into the sea of hopelessness...but technically, this was achieved unconsciously by the forces at work...or there might not even have been any consciousness involved at all!"

"A power like that...is indeed interesting!"

As Fang Yuan brooded, he placed his palms on the Door.

The Green Bronze Door had the roughest of surfaces and a hard chill emanated from its body. The true horror was that the ghostly carvings were flocking towards Fang Yuan's hands with their fangs bared and bit down savagely on them.

Crack! Crack!

Deafening metallic screeches filled the air but Fang Yuan's hands were unscathed. If anything, they had become stronger.

"Curse...unleash!"

Right now, Fang Yuan's power bar was fully charged at 50 points. This meant that in this world, he was practically invincible!

Boom! Boom!

With all the Tantaïs, Daoist Sanmu and Master Kuhai watching, the Green Bronze Door thundered and began to crack.

Light!

Light rays began to spill out from behind the door through the widening gaps. It was as if heaven lay behind that Door!

Abruptly, the light rays retreated, as if there was a black hole behind the door that was swallowing them up.

Jingle!

The Door swung open and shut continuously. Fang Yuan had disappeared.

At this moment, the survivors could feel their hairs standing on end. They could sense the presence of an indescribable and extraordinary entity.

...

"This is...the world behind the Door?"

Around him was nothingness. Bright light filled his surroundings. There did not even seem to be a notion of a ground.

Fang Yuan was unperturbed and strolled about in the void with his hands behind his back.

"A world in the process of being born? The product of a catalysis? Interesting!"

Even the sages among the dream masters could only upgrade their prosperous lands to Hollows, which were far from being worlds themselves.

Right now, before Fang Yuan was a complete little world, albeit one that looked slightly weird.

In contrast with the light was the richness of the curse's power, which rolled about in the void towards the unnerved Fang Yuan.

"This sort of ever-changing dream elemental force, let's call it cursed energy. It is the origin of everything...the invincibility of ghosts, their ability to create doppelgängers, alter memories, manipulate space and time, tamper with cause and effect, killing people in dreamworlds etcetera. They all stemmed from this origin!"

Fang Yuan walked towards the place where the curse's power was the densest.

Around him, the rich curse energy spread outwards and forced him to slow down. The clothes on his body began to decay and fall apart, revealing his taut skin and muscular physique.

Such...great power!"

Burn marks began to appear on Fang Yuan's face. It was like he had suffered a terrible sunburn.

"This sort of power is definitely tied to the Demonic Heart Realm, but it isn't dream elemental force!"

Occupied with his thoughts, Fang Yuan continued to walk about until a black dot suddenly materialised before him.

A suffocating sensation came over Fang Yuan.

Using his Fiery Golden Eyes, Fang Yuan could see that there was a skeleton sitting cross-legged at about 100 metres ahead. An object that looked like a purple diamond was firmly grasped in its finger bones. Dream elemental force radiated outwards from it.

The radiated dream elemental force was then absorbed by the skeleton. When the energy was released once more, it had already become the strange curse energy!

"Power from a higher plane?"

As Fang Yuan looked on, he let out a sigh. This was the truth behind the cursing of the world!

"It is in this state now because it swallowed something it

shouldn't have. Even if this world still had the will to survive, it would be helpless..."

"Fortunately...even if it is in another universe, it must surely have a source. It cannot come from nothing!"

Fang Yuan took a few more glances at the skeleton.

Even though he was seeing it for the first time, it gave him a feeling of familiarity.

"It's Tantai Moya!"

Fang Yuan fell silent again.

Back then, Tantai Moya had sensed that huge developments were underfoot in the netherworld and had forced his way in, breaking a taboo in the process.

His unthinking act was the direct cause of the subsequent series of disasters that ravaged the Outer World.

Had the skeleton converted the pure dream elemental force into cursed energy?

Fang Yuan was beginning to understand.

"Originally, this purple crystal belonged to the Demonic Heart Realm. But no matter how powerful it was, it could only be used as a tool...Tantai Moya's arrival was the missing puzzle piece! It was either through Tantai Moya's death or examination that the purple crystal gained the ability to spread fear and death...after all, it needed someone who understood fear in order to help it unleash the curse!"

"Your centuries of waiting is almost ended!"

Fang Yuan took a few big strides forward.

"But it's a pity that...you met me!"

Swoop!

Having finished speaking, Fang Yuan pounced like a leopard. He

threw out a string of runes with each of his hands which blew open the void. The sound was deafening.

Buzz!

The skeleton shook slightly in the face of Fang Yuan's assault.

The purple diamond twinkled.

Bang!

Fang Yuan was thrown backwards at the speed of a cannonball.

Starting from his fingers, his body looked as though it was about to crumble.

It was the feeling of an egg being impacted by a stone. Fang Yuan felt a crushing pressure from above!

He fell hard to the ground and forced himself to quickly get to his feet.

"This is...this is but a stray source of power. How could it have done this?"

Having tested the waters and finding out more about the power source, Fang Yuan was enraged!

At the same time, he felt greedy.

The nature of such a power was threatening to destroy him!

Comparing the power of sages to it would yield a difference of that between the firefly and the sun. If dream elemental force was a cotton thread, this power would be on the level of steel wire!

"Truly...this is worthy of investigation!"

Fang Yuan laughed maniacally and strode forward.

Kaboom!

The area around the purple crystal began to glow up.

"Shuk shuk!"

The bright white lights and the cursed energy had disappeared

completely.

All around Fang Yuan was the colour purple!

Purple light spilled out from the crystal like a waterfall and rushed over Fang Yuan's body.

This savage attack cut through Fang Yuan like a thousand knives and pain overwhelmed his senses. His flesh was disintegrating.

Painful!

Very painful!!

Even so, Fang Yuan did not show the slightest emotion and walked towards the skeleton determinedly.

90 metres! 50 metres!

Closer! Even closer!

The skin and flesh on Fang Yuan's face had peeled apart, revealing his facial bones underneath.

As he edged closer to the purple crystal, the purple light became even more blinding, which reduced him further into a skeletal form.

'If even my body is suffering in this way, Tantai Moya's should have been broken down completely...that his body is still in this state probably meant that the purple crystal had chosen it to become its host.'

'If even a person of my physical prowess cannot approach the crystal, the world would be doomed!'

Fang Yuan thought to himself as he walked on and left a trail of bloody footprints behind him.

It was through struggling that he managed to close in on the white skeleton. He stretched out both of his hands.

In the purple light, Fang Yuan had extended what seemed to be a pair of...white bone claws!

Fang Yuan had turned into a skeletal figure with golden light shining from his eye sockets.

"Triple curses, superimpose!"

Three Strange Level curses were unleashed upon the world, dimming the purple light emitting from the crystal slightly.

Seizing this opportunity, the white bone claws snatched over the purple crystal.

Whoosh!

The skeleton holding the purple crystal had turned into ash and vanished.

Fang Yuan paid no attention to that for he was focusing all his energy on conquering the purple crystal.

Sizzle!

The searing light and heat melted the bone claws such that they dripped onto the ground into a viscous liquid.

A purple band had encircled his arms and was coiling around his body.

"Such a ferocious power. Any form of resistance seems to be futile!"

In a blink, the purple light had climbed all over Fang Yuan's skeletal structure.

A golden light strobed in Fang Yuan's skull.

"This is the origin of all curses! The burden of a world? Spirit Sealing Body...the World's Will. Even though you have all but disappeared, you must help me. Seal it up!"

"Kaboom!"

A swirl appeared and began to devour the purple crystal.

Simultaneously, the purple light illuminating Fang Yuan's body was swallowed up.

After sealing up 4 evil spirits and 3 Strange Level curses, Fang Yuan's Spirit Sealing Body technique had advanced to a level that went beyond his expectations.

After all, such a spiritual body was not supposed to exist in this world. It was the World's Will that created this child of destiny! It was this world's last stand, with a mission to seal up the origin of curses!

Now, Fang Yuan was representing this world in the fight against the alien Demonic Heart power!

"What strong resistance...this has completely eclipsed the Strange Level!

At this point, the purple crystal continued to emit a mysterious light and put up a violent resistance.

Fang Yuan felt like he was using a hemp rope to trap a fiendish dragon. He was expecting a terrible struggle to happen any moment now!

Chapter 542: Original Energy

Outside the Green Bronze Door.

Tantai Guijing, Daoist Sanmu and Master Kuhai stared at the Door with doubt in their eyes.

"The Door...is only a protective layer. The true core lies behind it?"

Tantai Guijing's eyes were open wide.

"Just this Door alone was enough to nearly wipe out the Tantai family..."

The more he found out, the more insignificant he felt in the grand scheme of things.

He felt a wave of panic too.

The Tantai strategies had always been targeted at the Green Bronze Door. Now, it was clear that even if the Door were to be destroyed, the Tantai family would not be safe. If anything, having to face that entity directly would plunge them into greater despair.

"Amitufo...I'm ashamed at myself for not being of any help..."

Master Kuhai shook his head sadly.

Even though the Green Bronze Door had closed and lowered its defences, no one was powerful enough to approach it.

This alone was enough for them to realise the huge disparity between their abilities and Fang Yuan's.

"It's been so long. What in the world could be happening in there?"

The Daoist Sanmu made use of his daoist techniques and divination skills, but he only ended up more confused than ever.

"I can't be sure..."

Tantai Guijing shook his head.

"With regards to that entity, the concept of Time would be of no concern. Years in the outside world might be the equivalent of a mere moment in there!"

Buzz!

Just as he spoke, the Green Bronze Door began to scream once more.

"Woowoo!"

The black chains slid off the Door and the two ghostly guards let out a whimper before they melted into a puddle of blood.

The carved figures of people crying tears of blood had adopted serene expressions on their faces and were beginning to fade.

"Amitufo...helping souls gain salvation is truly a noble deed!"

Master Kuhai pressed both his palms together and recited mantras at the top of his voice.

Crack! Crack!

Web-like cracks appeared on the Door and began to extend like cracks on ice. Then the Door exploded into pieces.

Another great black Door appeared in its place. It was like a rebirth.

Although this Door still carried with it the smell of death and silence, it was peaceful. It no longer displayed the intent to brutalise.

"This...this is the legendary Heaven's Gate!"

Tantai Guijing and Daoist Sanmu were awed.

"This is the mythical core of the world. Crossing it would lead to immortality and sagacity!"

At this point, a mysterious light emitted from the Door and cleansed the world.

Before the Tantais, the monk and the daoist knew it, they were

transported out of the netherworld and back to the human world.

"This is...the human world!"

"We're...finally back!"

At that moment, all the Tantaïs were shedding tears of joy.

Tantai Guijing saw more.

"The curse...it's gone?"

The 20-year cycle had been a part of the Tantai bloodline for as long as they could remember. Now, it was finally gone forever.

"Could it be...that Tantai Mieming has succeeded?"

Tantai Juexin had a mixed look of disbelief and elation on his face.

"Everything wrong with the world...is right again?"

Daoist Sanmu and Master Kuhai looked astonishedly at each other.

"I did not think that our young Friend Fang Yuan was this formidable!"

Unfortunately, from this day onwards, no one would hear from Fang Yuan again.

In a blink, 30 years had gone by.

Time passed in the original world as per its original track, as if nothing out of the ordinary had ever happened before.

The widespread rumours of ghosts and curses were eventually proven to be fake.

The professional exorcists also found that the supernatural abilities that they had inherited or cultivated with great effort were leaving them. They became no different from the man on the street.

As more time passed, even within closed circles, talk of ghosts

and curses became myths.

Only a select few knew that their world had once fallen into a bottomless abyss.

But the evil, fear, despair and struggle of days past were insignificant in the face of time's passage.

Years later, even the Tantai family had reintegrated into the masses. That person's name was gradually lost in history.

...

In the deepest recesses of the netherworld.

On a black piece of land, a mound appeared, then a hand.

"Whew..."

Fang Yuan exhaled and looked up at the quiet glimmering of the stars in the night sky.

"This is...the netherworld?"

He scanned his surroundings. The darkness of the environment made it a good resting place for spirits. It was a tranquil and forgotten place.

"This must be the true appearance of the netherworld. To think that the other world collapsed after the purple crystal was sealed up..."

Fang Yuan looked down at his naked torso.

A strange circular mark had appeared on his belly. The circle had a purple mark in the middle that it trapped.

"After a stalemate that dragged on for so long, I emerged victorious!"

Fang Yuan's mouth began to twitch and he broke out into heavy laughter.

That purple crystal was truly the highest form of energy in the Demonic Heart Realm. Sealing it had almost destroyed his body.

Nevertheless, he was not of this world and his stats had broken the scale. His regenerative abilities were stunning, which led to a stalemate. He had also been quietly aided by the World's Will, which had begun to awaken. After a protracted stalemate, he had finally managed to seal up the purple crystal.

Still, he had been seriously injured and found that he was not even able to move at all. Thus, he fell into a deep sleep.

When he had woken up, he had turned up right here.

"This was...truly a close shave. It's a good thing that I've reaped a great deal from this!"

Fang Yuan rubbed the mark on his body and received information from the Spirit Sealing Body.

"Original Energy?"

Cultivators who wanted to unlock the path towards supernormality had to begin by cultivating elemental force.

The martial artists had their own brand of elemental force, as did the spiritual knights. The same goes for the dream masters, who had dream elemental force!

Although dream elemental force was extraordinary, it was more similar than different with regards to elemental energy for they were both forms of energy that had been emitted from the origin of the world.

Original Energy was different. It was from the core, or even from a higher power!

It was the substance that held the laws of nature together. It was the essence of the world. It was everything!

Even though a small amount was left, it was enough to support the world. Not to mention that it continues to release lower forms of energy.

That purple crystal was Original Energy!

As long as it was still around, it would continue to give our dream elemental force. To Fang Yuan, this was an incredible thing.

"This does not tie in with the law of conservation of energy...wait a minute, the laws of nature are immutable...doesn't its existence prove that perpetuity is possible?"

Fang Yuan's eyes lit up.

If a perpetual motion machine could exist, then immortality was possible too!

Fang Yuan had finally come into contact with the edge of immortality.

"This trickle of Original Energy beats all of the energy that I have harvested from the core of worlds so far...they are all of inferior quality..."

Given Fang Yuan's experience in the harvesting of worlds, he could definitely tell the difference.

If energy from the other worlds could be seen as blood cells, then Original Energy was akin to the bone marrow!

It was able to create and change the world because Original Energy was the foundation for world creation!

"This energy is of the same level as the entity that stripped the path of dream masters in the Da Qian world!"

Fang Yuan's eyes gleamed brighter.

"The propagation of just a small amount of that energy led to the creation of strange curses and invincible ghosts...it can manipulate spacetime, cause and effect, dream worlds...because it is the origin and the end of everything. Thus, we can call it 'Original Energy'!"

If Fang Yuan could fully absorb the essence of this bit of Original Energy, he would undoubtedly be as powerful as the entity from the Demonic Heart Realm.

However, although he had given his all, Fang Yuan had only

managed to seal this trickle of Original Energy. Even his Spirit Sealing Body had undergone some major changes.

Fang Yuan squinted and looked towards his stats board:

"Name: Fang Yuan (Tantai Mieming)

Essence: 100

Spirit: 100

Magic: 100

Profession: Exorcist

Technique: Exorcism (Peak), Pharmacy (Peak), Eagle Claw Grappling Technique (Peak) Skill: [Medicine (Level 3)], [Botany (Level 6)], [Fiery Golden Eyes (Level 1)], [Spirit Sealing Body (???)]"

As he was focusing on the question marks on 'Spirit Sealing Body', they disappeared and gave way to a full description: 'The Spirit Sealing Body has been maxed out and has changed in nature. It has transformed into a new speciality — Body Seal! '

"Body Seal — Your physique can tolerate everything. Right now, it cannot be activated because it has sealed up Original Energy!"

"My skills have levelled up?"

Fang Yuan was silent for a moment.

"The evolution of Spirit Sealing Body into the Body Seal seems rather useless. Of course...this is because sealing up the Original Energy was a most horrifying experience. Also...I sense that the other 4 curses have been absorbed by the Original Energy!"

The Original Energy from the Demonic Heart Realm was overbearing, but Fang Yuan had no regrets.

After all, he had the source of these energy forms in his firm grasp.

Besides, the Purple Eye Realm was weak to begin with. If it had been the Da Quan world, it would definitely be more difficult to

break its laws.

"When I recover fully, I will be able to challenge worlds!"

Fang Yuan clenched his fists and realised that he had never felt better.

The boundaries between the netherworld and the human world would no longer bother him. Just a thought and he would tear a hole in space and arrive in the human world.

He closed his eyes and extended the tendrils of his spiritual will. Suddenly, he felt a wave of desolation sweep over him.

"So...it's been 30 years?"

Chapter 543: Returning

The Da Qian World. Nine Extremes Mountain.

The Green Wood Sky Net Array sparkled. It was powerful yet calm at the same time.

Within the array, the Nine Extremes Mountain was covered in an abundance of greenery. Stalks of Yellow Grain Rice in the spiritual fields enjoyed rapid growth and brightened up the landscape.

As Liu Mengmei walked about in the fields, she suddenly felt a sense of tranquillity.

A human being's most basic needs were survival and reproduction. Survival would be ensured as long as one had shelter and food. In times of chaos, these were precious commodities.

People had begun to settle down comfortably on the Nine Extremes Mountain and there was no longer any talk of leaving.

"After this season's crop of Yellow Grain Rice is ready for the harvest, we would be more than self-sufficient. We would even be able to trade!"

Liu Mengmei did her calculations. Dream masters were more adept in agricultural techniques than one would expect them to be. They had to be, for they had to make preparations for their prosperous land and Hollow in the future.

From just a glance, she was able to estimate the yield of the fields. It was more than enough to fulfil her objectives.

"I have to say, the Yellow Grain Rice is quite an unorthodox crop..."

Meng Tian paced her from behind.

"The yield and growth rates of this plant are extremely high...Of course, nothing beats the Nine Extremes Rice cultivated by the mountain leader! 10 stones per mu is quite a shocking statistic!"

"I've heard that the mountain leader intends to spread the seeds of the Nine Extremes Rice plant all over the world. This would greatly benefit mankind!"

Meng Tian inquired expectantly.

"The Yellow Grain Rice may be great, but it is still the food of the dream masters. Can the average man afford to eat it?"

Liu Mengmei picked a flower and held it to her nose wistfully. As Fang Yuan's trusted subordinate, she knew things.

She knew that he had massive ambitions and had set his sights on the big picture. The little benefits brought about by a small trade like that was of no concern to him.

However, it would not hurt if he made use of the process of propagating the seeds to strengthen himself.

"Are you saying...that the Nine Extremes Mountain has been seeing an influx of refugees lately, as well as cultivators?"

Liu Mengmei raised a brow and suddenly had an idea.

"Having set up our temple in the Nine Extremes Mountain, we have to maintain the security of the region. The areas protected by the Green Wood Sky Net Array will keep them out, but there are other pieces of land that are available for settlement. We will only provide them with food and seeds if they recognise our authority and pledge allegiance to us..."

A large organisation would definitely have several subsidiaries. No matter how vulnerable and insignificant the mortals in the human establishments may seem, they provided the organisation with a constant supply of people and should not be discounted.

"Also...the Realm Alliance, Baize Mountain and other factions have traded with us before, but can't seem to stop putting on airs?"

Liu Mengmei laughed coldly.

"From today onwards, we will categorise our trade partners into

tiers. A trade limit will be placed on reserved items and core products will only be made available to our most esteemed customers..."

All these were things that Fang Yuan had mentioned before, and Liu Mengmei merely reiterated them.

"The Dream Masters Alliance of the present day is virtually powerless and yet they continue to act tough! We need to assert our dominance over them!"

"Your wish is my command!"

Meng Tian nodded and bowed respectfully as he retreated.

"Sigh..."

Liu Mengmei was downhearted as she gazed at the Nine Extremes Mountain.

"The mountain leader...when will he finally come out of his closed-door cultivation?"

Suddenly, a noise came from the temple gates.

"Has Extreme Darkness returned?"

Liu Mengmei went over to receive the arrivals and saw that a group of people were indeed gathered at the temple gates.

"Sister Extreme Darkness...how did the deal go?"

She ran her fingers through her hair and approached them with a smile.

"It was alright..."

Extreme Darkness's face stiffened. On the Nine Mountains, Liu Mengmei was in charge of the agricultural affairs while she was in charge of security. Extreme Darkness also had the added responsibility of settling external dealings. However, Liu Mengmei seemed to have something against her and always tried to antagonise her.

"With the armed escort provided by the mountain leader as well as the protection of Ado's Demon Army, those small fries wouldn't dare to try anything funny."

Extreme Darkness rolled her eyes.

"What about you, Sister...still pining for the day the mountain leader comes out from his closed-door cultivation? Hehe..."

She had wanted to say more, but two rays of green light suddenly flew into their arms.

"The mountain leader has returned?"

Liu Mengmei was overcome with happiness and rushed towards the main hall without a second look at Extreme Darkness.

"Hmph! What a vixen!"

Extreme Darkness looked on as Liu Mengmei ran off into the distance and laughed. Then she paused for a moment before laughing even harder.

...

"What a dream!"

In the bathroom, Fang Yuan let the warm water cascade down his body as he stared at his reflection in the mirror. He was stunned.

"After passing through so many worlds, I sometimes wonder who I really am."

Fang Yuan rubbed his face.

The man in the mirror still retained his youthful looks and did not look a day past 30, yet he was already one of the most powerful men in Da Qian.

Still, the present Da Qian was a shadow of its former self.

Fang Yuan glanced at his belly.

A black mark with a purple spot in its middle had appeared there.

"All that I have gained in the Purple Eye Realm is here...why am I suddenly getting a sense of deja vu?"

He rubbed his tummy with a troubled expression on his face.

Saving a world was a phenomenal achievement. The energy from the core of worlds could potentially help him to break through to the 7th tier of the illusionary divine stage immediately!

But the Purple Eye Realm was a relatively small world. If it had been a larger and more ancient world, Fang Yuan would have joined the ranks of the sages by now.

Fang Yuan did not care for any more energy from the worlds though.

What mattered most to him was the Body Seal ability as well as the trickle of Original Energy that he had managed to seal up!

Thus, Fang Yuan had made use of the World's Will's desire to expel the Strange energies as well as utilise the gains he had made so as to send himself back to this world. He had even brought along with him the new Body Seal ability!

If there had not been a world-destroying calamity, how would the World's Will allow an outsider from another world to take on its heavenly mandate?

In other words, Fang Yuan had baited the World's Will with an expected return and forced it to hand over the mandate!

Although the real son of heaven had died before he was even born, Fang Yuan knew that the key laid on the Body Seal ability. As long as one possessed that ability, he would receive the mandate of Heaven!

"Having received this ability, everything else pales in comparison!"

Fang Yuan laughed and looked at his stats board:

Name: Fang Yuan (Tantai Mieming)

Essence: 100

Spirit: 100

Magic: 50 (100)

Profession: ???

Cultivation: True Divine, Area Being, Illusionary Divine Stage (1st Tier)

Technique: Pangu Eagle Body, [8 Gates Sword Array (???)], [Elemental Spiritual Energy Cultivation Spell (Grade 5 (Completed))]

Skill: [Medicine (Level 3)], [Botany (Level 6)(Peak)], [Fiery Golden Eyes (Level 1)], [Body Seal (Ultimate form)]"

The Body Seal ability from the Purple Eye Realm was supposed to be formidable even in Da Qian.

However, even in its ultimate form, it merely shone with a dim light. It was obviously out of use.

"This is the price to pay for sealing up that bit of Original Energy!"

Fan Yuan put on his clothes and let out a sigh.

In truth, he did feel burdened by the small amount of Original Energy that he had sealed up in his body.

"I'm already on the right path...this bit of Original Energy is definitely of the same level as the entity that had stripped the path of dream masters in Da Qian. I will continue to move in this direction!"

Fang Yuan had a hungry look in his eyes.

In time to come, he would fully absorb the Original Energy and come into contact with that incredible realm.

"Although there were some hiccups along the way, I've already milked the experience for all that it was worth!"

After he had come out from his closed-door cultivation, he summoned a maid and found out that only a short time had passed. He then ordered his breakfast to be served and went to inspect his staff.

In the main hall.

Fang Yuan put down the jade bowl in his hand and peered at the 4 people who had entered.

"Hmm...what's the situation outside like?"

"Please rest assured, my lord. All is well. But we've been seeing an influx of refugees lately and some of them are interested in joining our organisation..."

Liu Mengmei was the first to report.

"Also...Baize Mountain was very satisfied with the last trade we made with them. They are keen in dealing with us further and are especially interested in the spiritual rice...the Realm Alliance has been lying low but our sources report that representatives of the Evil Divine Sect have approached them for a deal of some kind. I smell a plot..."

Extreme Darkness had memories of her previous life and was hence uncommonly wise.

"A plot...what do you think they could be plotting?"

Fang Yuan's interest was piqued.

"Probably to work more closely together and establish an alliance!"

Extreme Darkness giggled softly.

"Hmph...we dream masters are reviled figures these days. Why would they hasten their deaths by doing something so high profile?"

Liu Mengmei was unhappy with Extreme Darkness and tried to refute her claim.

"The dream masters can finally catch a breather because of the disaster brought about by the demon spirits... after all, dream elemental force is very effective against demon spirits. If we don't take this opportunity to regain our strength, we will be wiped out when the other forces in Da Qian come around..."

Extreme Darkness stared incredulously at Liu Mengmei.

"Sister, do you not understand something so simple?"

"Alright!"

Fan Yuan waved a hand. With him in charge, no one dared to say another word.

"The two of you have contributed much to our organisation..."

Fang Yuan's voice was calm but his heart was far away, beyond the Green Wood Sky Net Array. He could feel the rolling fields of Green Elemental Grass and the happy vibes transmitted from around the world.

With all these, he could regain his level of cultivation even without dream-traversing and strengthen the foundations of Nine Extremes Mountain.

"You are too kind, my lord!"

The two ladies acknowledged Fang Yuan's praise humbly but their eyes sparkled with glee.

"Don't worry, you two will be rewarded...let's not talk about internal matters first. Extreme Darkness, you are in charge of our external dealings. What is the situation in the current world?"

After the chaos at the start, by now, the surviving powers of the land would have resurfaced.

Chapter 544: The Trend

"The current world situation?"

Extreme Darkness ran her fingers through her hair and smiled uncomfortably.

"Not too good!"

"It is to be expected that the world would descend into chaos following the occurrence of the Demon Spirit invasion. As the saying goes, 'tough people rise during tough times'. Truly powerful factions would take this opportunity to consolidate their strength."

Fang Yuan wrung his hands.

"Has there not been any reaction from anywhere in the world?"

In truth, there were many underlying forces in Da Qian. While the power of the dream masters was declining, the spiritual knights and martial artists were waiting in the wings to replace them.

If the full potential for conflict of the entire Da Qian empire was to be realised, it would shake up the world.

Even though the Imperial Court and the dream masters were weak, they were still capable of putting up a good fight.

"Do elaborate!"

Fang Yuan said curtly.

"Yes, my lord!"

Extreme Darkness signalled for someone to fetch a map and her clear voice reverberated about the room.

"...After the battle in the Jade Capital, the dream masters were dragged down from their altars while the Imperial Court was destroyed. It was a devastating blow indeed! The Demon Spirits had overrun all 99 regions of the Da Qian empire. The Jade Capital

in the Middle Region was the worst hit! The regions around it are now deserted following the massacre of every living person! The whole area has become a playground for the Demon Spirits!"

She picked up a pen and traced the outline of the nine regions in the middle of the map.

"This area, once home Da Qian's greatest cities, is now a huge graveyard...casualties number hundreds of millions. There is nothing left to be said..."

"Beyond the 9 central regions, things are more complicated. Although they have also been affected by the invasion of the demon spirits, they are still accessible by the regional armies. However, a large number of Demon spirit troops remain stationed in the wilderness and attack the cities from time to time...the most famous incident involved Wu Yue and Zhang Jin, who had their entire army annihilated by the Demon spirit army and lost their lives..."

"I am not surprised!"

Fang Yuan clasped his hands together and nodded. These two people had been backed by dream masters and given that their backers had collapsed, they would have been dragged down from their horses by the martial artists and spiritual knights even if they hadn't been killed by the demon spirits.

Perhaps that was what happened.

"Following the fall of the dream masters, a few factions emerged to fill in the power vacuum. They scrambled to acquire territory in the name of protecting the masses. Some of them have also engaged the demon spirit army in a few skirmishes, which reinforced their legitimacy!"

Extreme Darkness continued.

"Overall, the world now can be split into 4 parts. Let's not talk about the lands taken over by the demon spirits. A Martial Alliance

has emerged in the north, comprising all the sects in the area. The organisation has managed to gather several top Wu Zongs and is headed by a True Divine...the lands of the north are barren and sparsely populated. The Dream Masters Alliance had not bothered to interfere in northern affairs back in the day. The Martial Alliance is working towards realising the potential in the North..."

Extreme Darkness spoke of this matter with disdain.

After all, the Dream Masters Alliance had indeed left the place alone. They had thought that it was a sterile land with no valuable resources.

"The Martial Alliance of the North?"

Fang Yuan was silent for a moment. He had never heard of this organisation but the North reminded him of the Qin siblings of Dongyi County in the Sand Region.

They were chess pieces that he had planted in the early days. Fang Yuan wondered at how they were doing, having been left alone for so long.

Although the Qin family was an influential clan in Dongyi, they would be helpless in the face of such a catastrophe.

"Hmm, we have two subordinates planted in Sand Region's Dongyi County...send our people to check out how they're getting along. If they're fine, then let's leave it at that. If not, ask them if they intend to move elsewhere!"

Fang Yuan made an expansive arm gesture.

The Nine Extremes Mountain was located on the southeastern part of Da Qian. Coming here from the north was a journey of tens of thousands of miles. Also, with the Demon spirits running amok, a large-scale migration was suicidal! Even if it was a small group, it would be extremely chancy.

Whether the Qin siblings would or could come depended on their level of determination and fortune.

Regardless, Fang Yuan felt that sending people to check on them was already a great display of benevolence. He saw no need to fetch them over personally.

"Yes, my lord!"

Liu Mengmei bowed and shot a challenging look at Extreme Darkness.

"As for the west, with the Fan Region in the centre, is witnessing the rise of a faction known as the God Seeking Palace! There are many True Divines and True Elementals from the Imperial Court in there. It has also been rumoured that Qian Huanyi and the Superior Wu Zun has joined them. The local government is under their control, their influence extends to the surrounding regions and they have even managed to secure the loyalties of the local militias. As a result, they have become insufferably arrogant!"

Extreme Darkness could not be bothered to entertain Liu Mengmei and focused on reporting to Fang Yuan.

"God Seeking Palace?"

Fang Yuan was slightly bemused.

"This place would be a perfect match for an old man on the brink of death who only knows how to sing ditties all day long."

"On the brink of death?"

Extreme Darkness was stunned. Although the folks from the Imperial Court were advanced in years, they had many more years to live by virtue of their solid cultivation.

"Don't mind me, go on..."

Fang Yuan motioned for her to continue. He had become warier.

God seeking! Their aim was probably to purge the world of their enemies. The ministers and generals of Da Qian did hate the royal family, but their enmity with the dream masters ran deep too.

"In the east...there are several petty factions who vie with each

other for hegemony. Many rise and fall within a short period of time. The Demon spirits have largely left the eastern lands alone because of their proximity to the seas and they are now hotbeds of anarchy. If our organisation does intend to expand, we can definitely consider going east!"

Extreme Darkness offered a suggestion.

"Hmm, are there any other spheres of influence in the world?"

Fang Yuan clicked his tongue in disbelief.

"The two organisations that we talked about have occupied several regions. They have a structured hierarchy, strict discipline among their personnel as well as capable people. But they are still regional powers..."

Extreme Darkness shook her head.

"Other than these, there are two alliances to note. They do not have headquarters and control scattered territory, but their collective power cannot be underestimated!"

"One of them...is the old Dream Masters Alliance?"

Fang Yuan fiddled with the cup in his hand.

"That's right...although the dream masters have fallen off their altar, we have excellent qualities. As long we work hard, we can trigger breakthroughs and regain power. We can also make use of the legacy of our forebears to become great again."

"No matter what, it's all in the past..."

A faint smile played on Fang Yuan's lips.

If he chose to publicise his deductions, it would probably cause an uproar among the dream masters.

He would keep his secret for a while longer.

"What about the other one?"

"The last one is a union of spiritual knights...the Heavenly Spirit

Association!"

Extreme Darkness was surprised even as she talked about it.

"This organisation was around in the days when the dream masters were still in power. Their web of contacts extended throughout Da Qian and was based on communication between the spiritual knights. They were also involved in trading activities. After the invasion occurred and the dream masters fell, they decided to come out of the dark!"

Fang Yuan tilted his head slightly. In terms of skill, the spiritual knights were second only to the dream masters.

If there was any group of people who could challenge the leadership of the dream masters back in the day, it would be the spiritual knights.

After all, there were many things that martial arts could not achieve. Spiritual spells, on the other hand, could accomplish results that rivalled the dream masters. They could even take on part of the research work.

Fang Yuan sighed quietly and made a mental note about the Heavenly Spirit Association being the Da Qian version of a Magic Masters' Association.

'In this case, the northern Martial Alliance would be a Warriors' Alliance. What about the God Seeking Palace in the West? An alliance of assassins? An alliance of remnants of the empire?'

Fang Yuan examined the map again.

The Martial Alliance, God Seeking Palace and the scattered factions of the east formed a large triangle. In the middle was the Dream Masters Alliance and the Heavenly Spirit Association. The Nine Extremes Mountain sect was but a speck in their midst.

Of course, these human factions took up less than half of the lands on the map.

The rest of the map had sunk into the ocean of demon spirits.

Human establishments might be able to surface in the lands of the enemy, but they would never amount to anything significant.

"The Dream Masters must be feeling so indignant."

Fang Yuan felt a wave of pity of them.

"They were once the most formidable organisation in Da Qian. Now, they have fallen quite far behind and might even be on the brink of destruction! I'd love to see the look on the sages' faces..."

If the Dream Masters Alliance descended into internal conflict once more, they would end up no better than the petty factions on the eastern coast.

"Looking at where the Nine Extreme Mountains are, the North is too far, the West is too cold and is currently being hampered by the demon spirits..."

Fang Yuan looked at the map.

"If we go to the middle we'll never return...seems like we can only expand towards the east?"

"Technically speaking, as long as we destroy the demon spirits wave after wave and settle the issue of the rations, we can expand anywhere we want..."

Extreme Darkness replied and smiled bitterly.

By now, the Demon Spirit army had swept across half of Da Qian like winter, causing all living beings to cower in fear of them.

Every other faction was retracting their forces and making plans to get through the dark times. Only Fang Yuan was thinking of expanding his territory.

"No matter what, being prepared is half the battle won!"

Fang Yuan gave a mysterious smile.

He was confident in his botany skills.

The entire Da Qian empire had crumbled in the face of the demon spirit invasion because of adaptability issues and the fact that the dream masters were not powerful enough.

However, following the propagation of the Green Elemental Grass, the world could finally begin to fight back.

Thus, Fang Yuan could take this opportunity to make some revolutionary moves!

Fang Yuan shut his eyes momentarily and he could smell change in the air. He giggled silently.

Chapter 545: An Old Friend

Fan Region, God Seeking Palace.

A layer of fog circled the above the mountain cliff. Qian Huanyi sat cross-legged and controlled his breathing, resembling a deity in heaven.

A flash appeared and Superior Wu Zun arrived with his hands behind his back, as though he had descended from above. "How's it?"

"I feel the same way too!"

Qian Huanyi composed himself. "The disturbed elemental energy and dream elemental force is beginning to settle down. It seems like the world is on the verge of recovery."

Both of them were among the best in their respective professions and had once been blessed by the realm's will before. Even after losing their positions, their senses were still as good.

"If that is so... The heavenly will is beginning to take action!"

Superior Wu Zun was elated.

"Even though the heavenly will is recovering, it is unlikely that the both of us will receive the blessings of the heavens once again! Are you still thinking of it?"

Qian Huanyi looked towards Superior Wu Zun and shook his head.

The both of them were blessed by the heavens previously because they had the support of the Imperial Court and the heavenly will felt that there was a need to keep the dream master sages under control.

Both conditions had to be satisfied. Now that Da Qian and the dream masters were severely injured, there was no longer a need for the heavenly will to bless and strengthen them.

"Hmph... It is always not wise to rely on others, for these benefits are only temporal, even if the entity we are relying on is the heavens!"

Superior Wu Zun scoffed. "After being blessed, both of us are as powerful as sages. However, at that point in time, our breakthroughs as martial artists and spiritual knights were restricted... Now that the restriction is lifted, we are free. Hehe..."

No matter what, the foundations of Da Qian would allow it to support the birth of countless sages!

Even Superior Wu Zun and Qian Huanyi had the possibility of becoming a sage!

Now that everything was settling down, they were tempted to try. Otherwise, they wouldn't have joined the God Seeking Palace.

"Among the energies of the realm, although dream elemental force is still the most powerful, it is unable to affect the other forms of elemental force. This is the time for martial arts and spiritual spells to become more powerful... Soon, we will be able to control our armies and attack the demon spirits."

As long as there was fair competition, these organisations were not the least afraid of the demon spirits.

After all, they were not stupid and were beginning to learn about the habits of the demons spirits.

"Naturally! Even as of now, there are only a few demon generals who can fight against us. I am already intending to test my skills on them!"

Superior Wu Zun clenched his fists and cracked his knuckles.

"It would be best if we can take them under control. However, these demons spirits are too cunning, and especially so for the demon generals. They have countless clones of themselves and it is almost impossible to wipe out every single clone of theirs....."

Qian Huanyi's eyes glistened.

He had a different plan from Superior Wu Zun.

'Now that the realm is recovering, I should follow the heavenly trend. It will be favourable if I am able to achieve a breakthrough and become a sage. Otherwise, it is also fine if I am able to unify the lands and rule over them, thereby allowing the heavens to bless me once more!'

Martial artists were all about brute force and overpowering others, while Spiritual knights were more sensitive to the environment, trying their best to be one with the realm. To Qian Huanyi, there was no difference in achieving a breakthrough or receiving blessings from the heavenly will.

Of course, he felt no need to tell Superior Wu Zun about his plans.

"Only..."

He changed the topic of discussion. "The realm is recovering very quickly! There must be something fishy going on. We have to check it out!"

They would be speechless if all of this was heaven's work. However, if it was the doing of someone, then that person would be competing with them to get the blessings of the heavenly will. This would put them at a disadvantage and they would never allow for that to happen!

"Hmmm, I find this weird too. Don't worry, the God Seeking Palace has already sent people to investigate!"

Superior Wu Zun scoffed. "These people don't seem to trust me though..."

"This is normal..." Qian Huanyi looked down. "Although they claim that they are serving us, they are merely using us as a deterrent factor. After all, it was a fact that we were once rather close to the Head of the Hidden Dragon Guards! However, it

wouldn't matter... Everyone is plotting against each other, and we shall see who will have the last laugh."

...

In the heart of Da Qian, the Guang Region.

Tens of thousands of Demon Spirits resembled a black ocean as they surrounded a particular mountain.

"Leader, there is... There is the arrival of 8 Demon Generals, and even the 3-tailed Scorpion Lion is among them!"

In the ancestral hall, an elder reported the news, flustered.

"The Guangming Sect... have survived the oppression from the dream masters, and yet we cannot survive this?"

The leader of the sect, a True Elemental spiritual knight, seemed disheartened.

"Our location is not favourable. We are too close to the core of the demon army..."

"It's useless to say all this now. Gather reinforcements! After all, we are members of the Heavenly Spirit Association!"

"Heavenly Spirit Association? I don't think help will come in time... First of all, it will take time for us to get help. Secondly, all the members of the association have their own troubles to deal with! Who would be willing to help us?"

...

The elders were engaged in a heated discussion.

"Forget it!"

Finally, the leader made the decision. "Request aid from all our allies. We shall guard this place with our lives. On a separate note, how's the migration of the sect going?"

"Ever since the invasion, we have been already been making progress. We are now at the last stage!"

All of them were not fools and could already predict the gloomy future, which explained their advanced preparations. "We have already made arrangements with the Martial Alliance in the North and the God Seeking Palace in the West. Of course, the focus is still on the East! However, although the invasion of demon spirits is not so intense there, they have their own troubles. We..."

An elder hesitated and his intentions were obvious.

Everyone would want to survive and would not sacrifice themselves at the expense of a certain ideal! Furthermore, in these troubled times, organisations would still require combat power!

"Do everyone have the same sentiment?"

The leader looked towards the few elders. "You're right, we need people to take charge there. The few of you can leave... I shall guard the mountain, even if it means I have to die!"

There were already at such a stage and yet, the leader of the sect was still resolute.

"Leader..."

The few elders exchanged looks and were speechless as they took their leave.

After three days.

In a bright glow, the entire mountain disintegrated into dust and even the army of demon spirits was severely injured.

From afar, a few demon generals observed the scene.

"A human True Elemental has sacrificed himself and his entire sect..."

"Agusi is such a poor thing. Too bad he was unlucky to have led the army."

"Nevertheless, he has many magical clones and all of them have the potential to assume his main body. Death doesn't really matter to him..."

These demon spirits would have numerous magical clones. Some of them were snakes, while others were in the form of humans with octopus tentacles, but all of them were equally weird and unnatural.

"I feel that something is not right!"

Suddenly, a huge black silhouette as large as a mountain appeared.

It had the form of a black lion and had three scorpion tails coming out from its back. However, it had the head of a human.

"Greetings, Three-Tailed Master! You were saying..."

With its appearance, all the demon generals bowed down in respect.

"This world has increased its resistance against us... Although this is inevitable, it has come too quickly..."

The 3-Tailed Scorpion Lion roared and spat out a mouthful of grass from its mouth. "I've done my investigations and found this!"

"Eh?"

The demon generals gathered around and were all in shock. "This grass can indeed stabilise the natural elemental energy in the surroundings. Although it is harmless against us, it is putting us at a disadvantage, for it will strengthen them! Could this be a natural retaliation from the world?"

Although these demon generals were not evolved from demon spirits, they were as mature and were full of experience and cultivation, making them similar to humans.

"These type of grass have propagated quickly throughout the world and we cannot stop it in time. However, judging from how it had appeared, this seems like the work of man and not nature!"

The 3-tailed Scorpion Lion heaved a puff of white smoke which formed the map of Da Qian, before marking out a certain point on

the map. "From the way the grass is spreading, it seems like the source must be among these few regions... In the future, they will be the ones leading the resistance against us. We must destroy them!"

"I agree!"

"Agreed!"

"This world will belong to us sooner or later! It belongs to the chaotic order!"

The demon generals agreed in unison and quickly came to a decision.

A new wave of demon spirits expansion had begun...

...

Nine Extremes Mountain.

Fang Yuan crossed his legs and started to explore the techniques of a dream master.

"To speak the truth, the dream master dao is extraordinary. Regardless if it is the 8 Gates Sword Array or any other paths, the final destination will be the same. One will be able to create beings and become a creator with power!"

After a few trades with the Dream Masters Alliance and understanding the information and secret techniques delivered from them, Fang Yuan began to grasp a new understanding of the dream master dao at an unprecedented rate.

"The only thing is... The foundation to all these is not sturdy enough!"

Initially, dream masters relied on dream elemental force and everything seemed lofty and unreliable. This was why the dream dao could be robbed off from Da Qian so easily.

Now, Fang Yuan felt that even the purest form of dream elemental force from the Demonic Heart Realm could not satisfy

his needs.

Anyone who would encounter Original Energy would agree with Fang Yuan.

"It's a pity... If I were to use my Body Seal technique, I will bring trouble... I should not attract too much attention!"

Fang Yuan had to admit the fact that if not for his Body Seal ability, he would never dare to think of harnessing Original Energy.

"I can only use Original Energy as my goal in order to strengthen the foundations of dream masters."

Fang Yuan started to seem depressed. "I did not manage to fully explore it the previous time. Must I really explore another world? Where should I go? Everything in the vicinity has been affected by the Demonic Heart Realm and have become unpredictable..."

He felt that only he could have helped the Purple Eye Realm. If other normal dream masters had dream-traversed to the Purple Eye Realm, they would only die there. Even sages would be toyed with by the curses in the realm and would not have the chance to even encounter Original Energy!

"I should remain low-profile and explore a few other worlds to further improve the foundations of the dream dao..."

Fang Yuan felt troubled. It's a pity that Da Qian had shifted, resulting in all the initial coordinates of other realms to become useless... Considering my current cultivation level, I will still need to put in a lot of effort to locate the coordinates of other realms..."

"Mountain leader!"

At this point in time, after Liu Mengmei had obtained permission, she entered the room and seemed worried. "Outside... There's someone claiming to be your friend's sister, and she's here to see you!"

Chapter 546: News

"Sisters?"

Fang Yuan was slightly confused but recovered himself when he saw them.

"It's you two!"

"Greetings to the mountain leader of Nine Extremes Mountain from Ye Shuhua and Ye Shumin!"

The older Ye Sister smiled at Fang Yuan stiffly and bowed.

"Please take us in on account of our friendship!"

Fang Yuan had gotten acquainted with these two ladies back in the Changli Hollow. They had continued to keep in touch, with the sisters helping Fang Yuan to acquire the Nine Smelting Technique other resources.

Fang Yuan blinked and the memories came flooding in. He sighed thoughtfully.

In fact, the Ye Sisters were even more surprised.

"It's only been a few years since he entered the Realm Alliance and he has already achieved so much?"

Ye Shuhua gazed at Fang Yuan.

"If you would protect us in these dark times...we will no longer have anything to worry about..."

She decided to put aside the last vestiges of her ego.

"Protect you?"

Fang Yuan was silent for a moment.

"Why not go to the Realm Alliance?"

"You must be joking, mountain leader..."

Ye Shuhua smiled sadly.

"In the Realm Alliance, there are many who hope to take advantage of us...besides, after all these major occurrences, our network of contacts have dwindled greatly..."

'Seems like the Realm Alliance holds great danger for them. Has their last backer fallen as well?

This was to be expected after the savage battle of the Jade Capital!

It was incredible that the Ye sisters could survive till today and even manage to make their way to the Nine Extreme Mountain.

"I thought...we had agreed previously that we no longer owed each other anything?"

Fang Yuan's mental faculty was still very much in control even in the face of feminine beauty. He looked at Ye Shuhua.

"You must be prepared to pay a price if I chose to protect you, for I will potentially have to challenge the Realm Alliance as a result."

"How can you still fear the Realm Alliance with your level of prowess?"

Seeing that Fang Yuan remained unmoved, Ye Shuhua could not help but feel dejected. She realised that he would not give in unless an offer was made.

"After such an upheaval, we no longer have anything left. However, we have recently heard a piece of news that the Realm Alliance, Baize Mountain and the Evil Divine Sect have decided to form the Dream Masters Alliance with these three organisations heading it. The dream masters under their charge must follow their orders or die otherwise...how much is this piece of news worth?"

"It is not uncommon for an organisation to assert its authority by using violence..."

Fang Yuan shook his head.

"You will have to do better!"

"There's something else...do you know why The Ancient One, the grand sage of the Realm Alliance, is content with mediocrity and has not made any attempt to accomplish anything?"

"You have aroused my interest!"

The Ancient One was a scheming fellow. He possessed the cultivation of a spiritual knight and had attained the level of a higher being, yet he was secretive to the extreme.

The fact that he was lying low during a time of upheaval such as this did not make sense at all.

Unless he was conserving his energy and preparing for a large-scale operation!

"The Ancient One has been concealing himself because he has set his sights elsewhere...Fang Yuan, have you heard of the Ancient Realm? Where sages attain the highest level of consciousness?"

Ye Shuhua had a complex look on her features. Revealing this information would set her up against the sages.

Although there was probably only one True Elemental spiritual knight among the sages of the Realm Alliance, they had a powerful reputation that intimidated her.

"Oh? Go on!"

Fang Yuan was excited. He had designs on the Ancient Realm, even though the Heavenly energy of that world would be too strong for him to overcome. It was probably time for another try, now that Da Qian's coordinates were shifting.

"Ever since there had been changes in the Ancient Realm, the sages have been trying to access it. They were making progress until the battle of the Jade Capital happened, which forced them to start over. Thus, their plans were delayed!"

Ye Shuhua had wanted to incite a conflict between Fang Yuan

and the Realm Alliance. This might make him more willing to protect them.

Fang Yuan believed her.

Among the dream masters in this world, only a few knew that Da Qian was shifting. This fact reinforced Ye Shuhua's credibility.

"How did you come to know about these secrets?"

The Ancient One making plans to conquer the Ancient Realm was not earth-shattering news, but the details would not be made available to every common member of the Realm Alliance.

"The Ye family is one of the founding families. Our family inheritance contains much valuable information..."

Ye Shuhua offered a rough explanation.

"If that's the case, you can pledge allegiance to the sage directly. No one would dare to cross the two of you by virtue of your status."

Fang Yuan asked them sceptically.

He was not a paranoid man but it always paid to be careful.

"Hmph...if only we could even see the sage. The only person we got to see was a disciple of the sage and he was a wastrel. He had hidden away during the battle of the Jade Capital and only emerged after to deal with us in the hope of gaining wealth and our bodies. We were not going to let him have his way!"

Ye Shumin answered angrily.

"Hehe...I see!"

Fang Yuan seemed to be expecting this answer, which made the Ye sisters blush.

"Alright, since you two have approached me for help, I can at least guarantee you temporary respite. We'll talk about the rest after I conduct my own investigations..."

Fang Yuan had made his decision. He then asked the sisters a

final question casually.

"How far is the Ancient One into his research?"

"He has already figured out the time travelling problem for the dream masters to the Ancient Realm and has almost completed his calculations of the coordinates!"

"Tsk tsk...no wonder the Dream Masters Alliance is ranked among the 5 Grand Organisations. Even after they had been dealt such a huge blow, the sages did not give up on their research and are now back on track."

Fang Yuan sighed repeatedly but was not surprised.

After all, the Realm Alliance was more knowledgeable than he was.

Besides, they had more than enough time to recover. After all, Fang Yuan himself had gone to and returned from the Ancient Realm in this span of time.

"What a pity...if it wasn't for the internal conflict within the Evil Divine Sect and if Baize Mountain hadn't gone under attack, the sages might have been able to pool their resources together and break new grounds in research!"

Fang Yuan waved his guests away. He had said his piece.

Liu Mengmei understood and immediately took the Ye Sisters to their lodgings.

"The Ancient Realm..."

Fang Yuan sighed.

That feeling that he had experienced the split moment before he left was one of a kind! He had felt like he was one with the realm.

'I've worked hard to gain the approval of the realm. I can't let the Ancient One harvest the realm's energy before I do..."

Fang Yuan was somewhat emotionally attached to the world.

For one, the Ancient Realm reminded him of the Former Qin era in his memories. On the other hand, it had accepted him.

The world had treated him as one of its own. This was a privilege that did not extend to visitors or intruders.

In other words, Fang Yuan saw the Ancient Realm as his right. Now that there was another hunter in the shadows, it was no wonder that Fang Yuan had become restless.

"Just as well. The Dream Realm has collapsed, leaving the Dream Alliance with no choice but to set up a temporary headquarters in the real world...I have to check it out..."

Fang Yuan was very interested in the dream-traversing techniques devised by the Ancient One for spiritual knights and the coordinates of the Ancient Realm indeed.

...

The Ye Sisters had made up their minds to break away from the Realm Alliance and were willing to tell him anything. They had also tried to egg him on to teach the disciple of the sage a lesson. But what they did not know was that Fang Yuan was targeting the Ancient One himself.

'The Ancient One is a tough nut to crack. Seeking him out would be an unpredictable endeavour. I might as well challenge him to a fight to the death!"

A plan was forming in Fang Yuan's mind.

Even the Lord Demon Killing Divine Pen of the Source Seeking Sect had been killed by him. He did not mind killing again.

If Fang Yuan had not been severely injured during his time in the Jade Capital, he would have massacred all of the sages!

After all, they would potentially become his enemies in the future! How could he let them off?

'The Realm Alliance isn't like the Baize Mountain and the Evil

Divine Sect. It didn't use to have a headquarters, is loosely organised and does not have a strong defence system. It would be easy to deal with them!'

Fang Yuan had become bloodthirsty.

"The Realm Alliance's makeshift headquarters is at the Heavenly Eye Lake at Jin Region...although it is two regions away, the journey is manageable albeit troublesome..."

Fang Yuan's mind was made up and he passed down some orders to his staff before setting off.

"Every time this happens, I'll miss those flying beasts...so much for the Divine Lotus Cult being one of the 5 Grand Organisations. They can't even deploy flying spiritual beasts!"

Fang Yuan grumbled as he bashed his way through the forest.

He was not being fair to the Divine Lotus Cult. After all, they did not specialise in raising and training spiritual beasts.

Besides, even if there were flying beasts, then they would be deployed to the Jade Capital as transportation and die horrible deaths in the process.

All the high-levelled dream masters had already taken away all the items in the headquarters. Although Fang Yuan had taken all of the techniques along with him, Liu Mengmei had told him that it will take time to train the flying spiritual beasts!

The flying spiritual beasts of the Divine Lotus Cult were not simple creatures. Their fighting prowess could rival even dream masters of the Illusionary Divine stage.

"Hmm...it'll take time to convert my knowledge of the Divine Lotus Cult's techniques into practical power..."

Fang Yuan sighed. He had made his move too late.

"Hmm?"

A disturbance ahead had caught his attention. It was the violent

oscillation of a wave.

"This vibration...it feels familiar."

Fang Yuan had wanted to ignore it but the sense of familiarity intrigued him. He followed the signs of the disturbance and found himself on the edge of a battlefield.

Chapter 547: The Black Roc Beast

This battlefield was seeing quite a bit of action.

There was a magnificent beast the size of a small mountain. It looked like a creature from the legends.

On its back was an inn-like building. It was, in fact, the Black Roc Beast that Fang Yuan had ridden on once before.

However, the Black Roc Beast now was in a terrible state. One of its wings was broken and it was unable to fly away. It could only thrash about on the ground as it defended itself against a large group of armed men.

"Black Roc! You won't escape this time!"

"If you surrender now, we might let you keep your wretched life!"

...

Profane taunts and jeers filled the air.

"Pui!"

Black Roc's exasperated voice floated out from the inn.

"I'd rather die than fall into your dirty little hands!"

'It's really him!'

Fang Yuan smiled lightly as he had recognised the voice of the specialised provider of long-distance flights.

'Although the most powerful man surrounding the Black Roc Beast was but a low-level Elemental Opening spiritual knight, the Beast was outnumbered and Black Roc's status as a former master of the illusionary divine stage was of no help. It was all thanks to the resistance of the Black Roc Beast that they were still alive!'

However, the Black Roc Beast was a flight carrier, not a war animal.

Still, it made use of the sheer size of its body to keep the bunch of

spiritual knights and Wu Zong on their toes. They all scurried about like terrified rats.

"It's a pity that the Black Roc Beast has injured its wing or it would have escaped easily! But now, it is defending itself on the ground and will surely be overrun in time. There is something about the bird though..."

Fang Yuan shook his head as he saw the attackers rush up the back of the Black Roc Beast and into the inn.

Size equates to strength but would lead to clumsy movements. Now that the attackers had taken their chances, the Black Roc Beast was rendered helpless and could not oppose them.

"Wood of the heavens, wooden dragon! Go!"

The leader of the spiritual knights recited a magical formula which caused green light to surge from his body. Vines surfaced from the ground and twisted around each other to form a colossal green dragon that smashed its tail towards the inn.

"Crash!"

A deafening sound rang out as the windows of the inn were broken into pieces. Wooden splinters flew up into the air and large cracks swam across the walls. Still, the inn held on as it was protected by an array.

"Haha... Black Roc, let's see what other cards you have up your sleeve!"

The spiritual knights were gleeful instead of feeling frustrated. They knew that their opponent had nearly reached the end of his line. The leader signalled for his underlings to lunge forward.

"Charge! Tear this crappy inn down to the ground!"

"Xue Jing, you are too much!"

Black Roc's fat physique appeared at the door to the Inn, his dark face clouded with anger.

"We have no beef with each other. Why are you forcing me to a corner?"

"The dream masters are scourges of the world and deserve to be eliminated!"

Xu Jing waved a hand.

"Back when you dream masters wielded power, we were treated like scum. We will now return the favour ten times over. This is the karmic cycle. If you have any grievances, you will have to take them to the grave!"

"So you think you can do whatever you want as long as you are powerful?"

Black Roc took note of Xu Jing's words and he smiled deviously as the men advanced up the back of his Black Roc Beast.

"In that case...all of you shall die! Beastie!"

"Chirp!"

The Black Roc Beast, previously looking spent, suddenly let out a thunderous caw that threatened to split the skies.

A blood-red glow covered the Black Roc Beast's body and the texture of its tough feathers became soft like mud. The huge bird was swallowing up the attackers through its skin.

The reddish light illuminated the terrified faces of the Wu Zongs.

"Haha...did you think that my last line of defence was simply the array I placed on the Inn? My real weapon is the Black Roc Beast!"

Black Roc laughed devilishly.

"You are all going to become food for my Black Roc Beast."

As the attackers were melted away by the reddish light, the Black Roc Beast let out a satisfied call. The Black Roc was happy as well.

His Black Roc Beast had undergone an evolution earlier and had developed several bizarre abilities as a result.

The reddish glow was a protective layer around the Black Roc Beast's body that broke through defences and struck fear into hearts. It created swirls on the surface of its body that sucked in any live being that came into contact with it.

After this discovery, Black Roc put in much effort into training his beast secretly and turned it into his trump card.

Now that this ability of his beast was activated, Black Roc saw for himself how effective it really was.

"It's a pity that Beastie's ability requires prolonged contact on its body before it can be activated, or I wouldn't have to try so hard to lure the attackers up its back to the inn..."

Black Roc spat out a mouthful of blood and began to clear up the mess.

"Sigh...the Da Qian now is no longer the Da Qian of old. Perhaps I should move elsewhere. There will definitely be a place in the world for me to settle down in!"

Fang Yuan had watched the entire proceedings with much interest.

In a short time, the tables had turned. Black Roc had played his cards well and had put on a great act to crush his enemies.

"Who's there?"

Black Roc called out cautiously and looked towards where Fang Yuan was hidden in the bushes.

"An old friend!"

Fang Yuan emerged from his hiding place and leapt up onto the back of the Black Roc Beast smoothly with his hands behind his back.

The reddish glow was activated once more but it surrounded Fang Yuan to no effect.

"Black Roc hereby greets Your Excellency!"

Black Roc had found this person familiar upon first sight but decided to kneel down all the same.

This person was immune to the special ability of the Black Roc Beast, which definitely meant that he was powerful!

The ferociousness on Black Roc's face was replaced by reverence and watchfulness. He could not help but become worried that this person was another member of the anti-dream master faction. It was also a cause for concern that Black Roc could not remember where he had seen this man before even though he had a nagging sense of familiarity.

"An old friend?"

This young man with a confident grin carried himself with the airs of a grandmaster who had established a name for himself.

'I can't help but feel like I've met him before!'

After sifting through his memories, Black Roc finally had an inkling.

"You are...the fellow from the Realm Alliance?"

"That's right. My name is Fang Yuan!"

Fang Yuan replied beaming.

"What?"

The Black Roc had become wide-eyed.

"You are that True Divine from the Realm Alliance?"

Black Roc was actually aware of much more regarding Fang Yuan.

For one, Fang Yuan had played a major role in the battle of the Jade Capital that had routed the dream masters. It was even rumoured that he had killed two sages by himself! He was supposed to be a formidable character, a living demon-king!

Of course, Black Roc had always taken these rumours with a

pinch of salt and only half-believed them.

After all, the sages were the elites among dream masters.

Still, as Black Roc gazed at the unfathomable Fang Yuan, he found that he had become more convinced of Fang Yuan's prowess.

"Are you afraid of me?"

Fang Yuan's smile widened.

"I am a lowly person and cannot help but tremble in the presence of such a great man..."

Black Roc tried his best to smile. He had years of experience entertaining guests in his inn and his smile was a convincing one.

Black Roc had given up on all his potential schemes upon learning that Fang Yuan was a True Divine. He had also calmed down for he did not think that Fang Yuan, being a dream master as well, would make things difficult for him.

'Wait...this Fang Yuan has no care in the world. He had dared to kill even sages. What am I to him?'

Black Roc could feel the bitterness in his heart threatening to overwhelm him.

'This must be the worst day of my life. Not only did I have to fend off a whole army of armed men, but I also have to deal with this devil now!'

"Right, who were those men?"

Fang Yuan asked casually.

"You're talking about Xue Jing. He was the leader of a nearby sect. He had recruited many people recently and was a rising force in the region..."

Black Roc grimaced indignantly.

"Even though he claimed to be affiliated with the Heavenly Spirit Association, who could verify that? He had taken the opportunity

to ambush me. My poor Black Roc Beast..."

"Enough of that...if you hadn't let the Black Roc Beast pretended that its wing was injured, the men wouldn't have climbed onto its back."

Fang Yuan rolled his eyes.

"Also...you are a bold man for having built the inn on such a precarious spot!"

Even though the Black Roc Beast did not mean anything to him, Fang Yuan got goosebumps thinking about how he had spent nights on the back of such an erratic creature. There were so many ways things could have gone wrong!

"Hehe..."

Black Roc chuckled as beads of perspiration lined his forehead.

"Alright, I had only come to investigate the commotion and have no intention of taking revenge for those people!"

Fang Yuan was serious now.

"It's just as well that I am heading over to the Heavenly Eye Lake in the Jin Region. You can fetch me there!"

It was a command. Fang Yuan did not think that Black Roc would dare to refuse him.

Fang Yuan was right.

"Heavenly Eye Lake in Jin Region? No problem, we shall set off at once!"

Black Roc agreed readily and slapped the Black Roc Beast on its back.

"Chirp!"

The colossal bird flapped its wings. A reddish glow fell over the injury on its wing and it began to heal immediately.

'An ability that absorbs life force and saves it for self-

regeneration...not bad at all!"

Fang Yuan nodded in approval and watched the world rush by as the Black Roc Beast shot up into the skies.

"It isn't every day that I get to meet a dream master. Go prepare some dishes and we shall have a good chat over a meal!"

Fang Yuan did not bother to stand on ceremony.

"No problem!"

Black Roc gave his trademark beam. He was an expert in the art of hospitality and had prepared an entire table's worth of premium dishes in no time. Fang Yuan began to dig in with relish.

"You are a good cook, fatty!"

Fang Yuan said with a wink between mouthfuls of food.

"Are you interested in coming to the Nine Extremes Mountain to become my cook?"

"Nine Extremes Mountain?!"

Black Roc was taken aback.

"So what they say true...Your Excellency is the master of Nine Extremes Mountain!"

"That's right...tell me, what do they say about me?"

Fang Yuan toyed with the wine cup in his hands.

"Do tell...I won't bite!"

Chapter 548: Escape

"The things they say about you?"

Black Roc's smile stiffened.

"About that...I'm not sure. All I've heard is that Your Excellency's mastery of martial arts and dream dao is matchless. A prodigy that only turns up once every few thousand years!"

"Is that so?"

Fang Yuan stared at him, eyes twinkling.

He was in fact very much aware of his own reputation. He had killed sages, which was an act of taboo as a dream master. He had also made a name for himself as a martial artist, which gave people a sense that he had been punching above his weight.

The martial artists, on the other hand, were jealous of his spectacular achievements in the dream dao.

Fang Yuan had virtually offended everyone and had thus achieved widespread notoriety.

Fang Yuan had not made things difficult for Black Roc though.

Black Roc was once a master of the illusionary divine stage but after his foundations had been destroyed, years of cultivation had all gone down the drain. He was left with only the cultivation of a dream-building master. It was a very long fall down indeed and his plight evoked sympathy.

This was the current state of most dream masters.

Unless they had a backer or switched to another discipline, they would have a very low chance of survival.

'Actually...the amount of dream elemental energy within Black Roc's body has not changed. It just lacks the direction of the dao, which is why Black Roc has been unable to utilise its full power...his current skill level is similar to that of an illusionist.'

Fang Yuan threw a glance at the Black Roc Beast and knew that if the creature had not been raised by Black Roc since young, he would not be able to control it given his current abilities.

"Mountain leader, if you don't mind, I am willing to pledge my allegiance to you!"

Black Roc was nervous as Fang Yuan eyed him calmly.

He would be an idiot if he did not choose to join Fang Yuan's ranks.

Back in the days when he was still in possession of his previous levels of cultivation, he could afford to become a lone ranger. But now, he would be courting death if he did not manage to find a backer for himself.

"Hmm...fly to Nine Extremes Mountains after you drop me off at the Heavenly Eye Lake and my men will receive you!"

Fang Yuan took out a jade token.

Fate had arranged their meeting and Fang Yuan did not mind helping a friend in need.

"I have travelled across the 99 regions and do know a thing or two about the world..."

Black Roc was eager to display his loyalty.

"Could I be of any help to Your Excellency?"

"You?"

Fang Yuan shot a glance at him and shook his head.

"No need...you may leave after you drop me off. I don't want to be held back!"

The location of the temporary headquarters of the Realm Alliance remained a secret. Dream masters of Black Roc's level would never be able to access it. Black Roc would never have thought that Fang Yuan was targeting the headquarters of one of

the 5 Grand Organisations!

Even though the dream masters were weakened, it was still an unthinkable venture!

Nevertheless, Black Roc was a clever man and knew that given Fang Yuan's status, the fact that he was dealing with this matter personally meant that it was a pressing issue indeed. Thus, he dropped the matter entirely when Fang Yuan said that he did not require help. Fang Yuan was impressed with Black Roc's situational awareness.

...

The Heavenly Eye Lake had its vast waters enveloped in a fog. The waters were deep and fathomless. It was one of the Great Lakes of the Jin Region.

The headquarters of the Realm Alliance was hidden within. It was like looking for a needle in a haystack and there was no way that outsiders could trace it. Even the Black Roc felt lost when he had dropped Fang Yuan off.

The Heavenly Eye Lake had not been known to have any treasures. Why did the great Fang Yuan choose to come here?

But he understood the need for secrecy and knew better than to question Fang Yuan's decisions. He was not looking for trouble after all and left immediately.

"What a huge lake..."

Fang Yuan boarded a little canoe, which cut smoothly across the water without the aid of the wind.

"I would've gotten lost if the Ye sisters had not given me a specific address...what kind of story can I cook up for my purpose for this visit?"

After all, he was once a member of the Realm Alliance.

Even though the Realm Alliance has treated him harshly, it was

not unreasonable for an organisation to haze newcomers.

Fang Yuan had killed two sages and if he orchestrated another massacre over here, his traitorous name would spread further and wider.

"Forget it, I shall conceal my identity and focus on eliminating the Ancient One...the world is in such a big mess. The demise of a True Elemental spiritual knight would not be unexpected. No one would suspect a thing."

This was the main reason why he had taken Black Roc under his wing. He had placed a tracker on Black Roc. No harm would befall him if he followed Fang Yuan's orders and flew back to Nine Extremes Mountain. Otherwise, Fang Yuan would see to his execution.

Having decided to kill anyone who gave him away, Fang Yuan could not be bothered to put on a disguise.

The operation was supposed to be undertaken secretly anyway. In the event he was discovered, he would fight! There was nothing to hide.

The best outcome was for Fang Yuan to find out where exactly the Ancient One was conducting his closed-door cultivation. He would then kill his target and escape immediately.

If he was harder to kill or had several lines of defence, then Fang Yuan would have no choice but to reveal himself.

There was nothing personal about this. It was just inevitable that they would cross paths.

The Ancient One wanted to utilise the power of the Ancient Realm to become one with the dao again. Fang Yuan, on the other hand, wanted to harvest the energy of the Realm to boost his own abilities. Their objectives were in conflict with each other and their conflict could only be settled in a death match.

'The Ancient One is a shrewd man. He knew that the Da Qian of

today is not a good place to live in...he had begun to grow and expand his farmlands so that he can surprise everyone with his progress one day!

After the sky turned dark, Fang Yuan put on white robes and came to one of the islands on the lake.

On first sight, the island was no different from the rest. However, upon closer inspection, one could see buildings and spots of light lining the shore like stars in the night sky.

"The array set up over here...it's the Nine Skies Heaven and Earth Array. Although a superb and profound array, the person who set up the array did not have sufficient cultivation, resulting in the array not being able to keep higher beings out..."

Fang Yuan saw a ray of light and shook his head. He broke out into a laugh and wriggled his way through the array.

The protective arrays of Baize Mountain and the Evil Divine Sect were set up personally by the sages and maintained by many 7th tier masters of the illusionary divine stage. Those arrays would hold in the face of all sorts of disasters.

The Realm Alliance, however, was not as organised and was not housed in a fixed location.

Their array was a hastily set up one and was thus unable to unleash its full power despite its exquisite potential.

Fang Yuan could pass through the boundaries of the array as and when he liked.

"The Ancient One would be located at the core of the array. It would not be so easy to get to him!"

Fang Yuan turned himself into a spectre and walked about within the array. The patrolling guards did not manage to detect him at all. Slowly but surely, Fang Yuan moved closer to the heart of the island.

"The Dream Masters Alliance is planning a large-scale operation. It is currently gathering all the dream masters and consolidating all its resources. I doubt the Ancient One would want to miss this opportunity. I wonder what his choice would be."

Fang Yuan's level of cultivation was at the True Divine stage, making him one of the most powerful men alive. He had a 30% chance of succeeding in an invasion via brute force. Fang Yuan scanned his surroundings and locked onto a target.

"Is the Ancient One in that hall?"

An old bronze hall stood alone a short distance away. Closely woven runes formed chains that surrounded the building, which emitted a bright light.

This was an array that could block out higher beings!

"Whoosh!"

Fang Yuan's gaze hardened as he turned into a blast of wind and rushed into the array.

"Sizzle!"

This was the toughest part of the array and now that Fang Yuan had barged into it, a chain reaction went off.

The entire array was now an enraged beast and began to roar. Lines of runes floated out and encircled Fang Yuan.

"Kaboom!"

There was a jolt in the void and a great weight came crashing down on Fang Yuan's shoulders. The gravitational force in Fang Yuan's surroundings had increased by 9 times!

If it was not for Fang Yuan's invulnerable physical condition, he would have died a horrible death.

"Nice try..."

Fang Yuan exhaled nonchalantly. The attack had barely taken

anything out of him.

"Crack!"

The rune chain around his body shattered into pieces. It was as if they had been used to hold a ferocious tiger, who had broken free after a token struggle.

"Who goes there?"

"Who dares to break into the headquarters of the Realm Alliance?"

"Where's the patrolling team? The elders must be alerted immediately!"

...

Fang Yuan's actions had launched the whole island into an upheaval.

Fang Yuan had already begun his assault and came before the bronze hall. He clenched his fists and threw out a heavy punch.

"Bang!"

The two great doors were blown apart, revealing an empty chamber.

Within the silent and mysterious hall, arrays and rituals were set up all over the place. An armillary sphere was placed in the middle and gave off a blinding light.

The Ancient One stood before the sphere and looked over at Fang Yuan with a stunned expression.

"It's you!"

A steely determination suddenly came over his face. The Ancient One bit down on his tongue and spat out a mouthful of blood on the sphere.

"Rotate!"

"Buzz!"

A ray of light sped up towards the heavens and tore open the dark skies.

"Hmm?"

In a flash, Fang Yuan had come to the side of the Ancient One and pressed a hand to his forehead.

"His physical form is lifeless now? How resolute of him!"

Fang Yuan was impressed by the Ancient One's cold decisiveness.

Upon seeing Fang Yuan, the Ancient One knew that he was going die today. Even with the entire Realm Alliance behind him, there was no escaping Fang Yuan given his abilities.

Thus, the Ancient One had sent his true aura through the armillary sphere and into a portal.

The dream-traversing of a dream master only involved a little of their true aura so that they would keep their physical form in the event they met with any harm. The Ancient One, however, had gone all in.

"In other words...the Ancient One had become a new time traveller! Travelling to the Ancient Realm?"

Fang Yuan rolled his eyes.

It was obvious that the Ancient One had not planned to do that at first. Fang Yuan's entrance into the hall was the triggering factor.

"When did I become such an abhorred figure?"

Fang Yuan rubbed his cheeks gingerly. His mere appearance had scared a sage into running away. Fang Yuan was speechless and slightly proud of himself.

Truly, if the Ancient One had been any slower, Fang Yuan would have destroyed the very core of his being!

Chapter 549: The Armillary Sphere

"Did someone break into Star Hall?"

"It was probably a higher being, a Martial True Divine or a True Elemental Spiritual knight!"

The island had descended into chaos as the all the dream masters in the Realm Alliance were activated.

In the past, a True Divine or True Elemental spiritual knight would not be too hard to for the dream masters to deal with.

For example, the Elder Smelter dared to challenge the Venerable Longhu all those years ago because of his latent power.

However, times had changed!

"Bang!"

In the midst of all the commotion, a deafening sound rang out from the bronze hall.

A gaping hole had been torn into the rear wall of the bronze hall. A dark shadowy figure had sped out at a blistering speed and there was no way anyone else could keep up.

Of course, it was not like they wanted to or dared to chase after the shadowy figure either.

"Given that he had broken through the Realm Alliance array, could this True Divine be targeting a sage?"

The few remaining elders streamed into Star Hall and saw that the armillary sphere in the middle of the chamber had disappeared. A large hole lay in the place where it had once stood.

Beside the hole lay a dried up corpse. It was that of an old man and the elders could see from the clothes it was wearing that it was the Ancient One!

"The Ancient One...is dead?"

A dream master fell to the floor in a daze.

The dream masters being swept off from their altar was already a huge blow. Now that their foremost sage had fallen, the implications were unthinkable.

"Pass down orders from the elders' council. This hall is to be sealed up! No news is to be leaked out!"

"Not even a word!"

An elder who had recently been promoted sucked in a breath of cold air. He turned around with a stern look.

"What we're looking at right now is the shell that the great sage left behind. The great sage has gone to dream-traverse through the three thousand worlds!"

"Yes! That's right!"

The other elders looked at each other furtively. They knew that if news of this matter got out, the Realm Alliance would fall apart.

"Also...who's the murderer?"

The elder bent down to examine the Ancient One's corpse suspiciously.

"Not many people in the world could make it past the array placed on or perimeters. There are only a few left after eliminating those who have retreated..."

He then thought to himself:

'Unfortunately...whoever it is, the Realm Alliance is not in the position to offend him.'

"Elder Song, what do you suggest we do? We are all behind you!"

The core leaders among the dream masters exchanged a look with each other and agreed unanimously.

"Excellent. The most important thing we should do right now is to stay united!"

Elder Song's eyes gleamed.

"We shall spend this time on consolidation and keeping to ourselves. If this piece of news were to leak out, Baize Mountain and the Evil Divine Sect would take the chance to wipe us out!"

Being on different parts of the hierarchy would beget different perspectives.

To others, halting the Realm Alliance's expansion of influence might be a bad move but Elder Song saw this as an opportunity.

As long as he could reinforce his personal authority and gather all the forces of the Realm Alliance to his side, he would become a hegemon in his own right!

Even if he could not do that, wielding some degree of power in the Realm Alliance would ensure that he was well-regarded no matter whom he chose to ally with in the future!

If necessary, he would use the entire Realm Alliance as his bargaining chip.

He had learnt a great many things from having clawed his way up from the bottom!

...

"No one actually bothered to chase after me. The Realm Alliance has reached a new low..."

Fang Yuan had reached the shores of the island and boarded the little canoe unhurriedly. He did not know what to feel as the lights of the island faded into the distance.

The Realm Alliance was loosely organised and relied on the Ancient One together with his team of 7th Tier Illusionary Divine dream masters to maintain order.

The Ancient One had held on to his power despite everything by virtue of his coolheadedness and his status as a True Divine spiritual knight. He was a wily man indeed.

With their stabilising figure gone, it was inevitable that the Realm Alliance was going to fall into disarray.

"My failure to kill the Ancient One will lead to many more problems in the future!"

Fang Yuan decided to stop over at one of the deserted islands, where he found a cave to settle down in. He then took out a few crystals to illuminate his dark surroundings.

Immediately after, he produced the Mountain River Pearl and tilted it gently.

"Kaboom!"

The world around Fang Yuan began to tremble as a simple looking armillary sphere fell to the ground with a dull thud.

This armillary sphere had a bronze base and many runes were inscribed on it with intricacy and precision. There were three large rotating bands held together by a golden bearing.

"Heaven and Earth will define spatial dimensions..."

Fang Yuan muttered to himself as he ran his fingers along the armillary sphere.

"The three rotating bands represent the three-dimensional world...the golden bearing is the long river of time that connects the past to the present...is this what the Realm Alliance had in mind when they designed the armillary sphere?"

Fang Yuan had many achievements and becoming one of the great academics of his age was one of them. Now that Fang Yuan got to examine the latest product of the Realm Alliance's research, he realised that it reinforced the accuracy of much of his knowledge. It was a beneficial experience for him.

"This armillary sphere serves as a calculator of realm coordinates...through deduction, we can obtain the coordinates of the worlds beyond Da Qian!"

Fang Yuan thought for a moment before placing his hand on the machine and exerting elemental energy on it.

"The Da Qian world has shifted, thus rendering all the calculated coordinates useless. Even the Dream Master Astral Projection Technique had been compromised. But the Ancient One had managed to devise an alternative in such a short time!"

With the sturdy injection of dream elemental energy, the whole armillary sphere began to glow up in a multitude of colours.

"The Ye sisters had made an error though...the Realm Alliance had not created a new method for spiritual knights to dream-traverse. They still have to use dream elemental energy as well as rely on specialised equipment..."

As Fang Yuan stood thinking, the armillary sphere came to a halt. A dark gap had opened up in thin air where dim spots of light could be seen from within.

Fang Yuan also felt a sense of closeness and belonging.

"This feeling of familiarity can't be wrong. It must be the Ancient Realm!"

Lights had begun to dance in Fang Yuan's eyes but he held back from travelling immediately.

"This is the last coordinate that was set on the armillary sphere. It seems that the Ancient One's intended destination was the Ancient Realm...he managed to secure access to the realm because he had gambled on it using his life essence. It was also because the arrays in Star Hall aided his efforts..."

Fang Yuan could not match the Ancient One in terms of resources but Fang Yuan had his own strengths too.

His level of cultivation was unaffected and he could simply make use of the traditional method of dream traversing as long as he had the correct coordinates.

"But...the Heavenly Eye Lake has been seeing quite a lot of action lately. This entire place is within the territorial confines of the Realm Alliance. After causing such a huge commotion, there would probably be a thorough search conducted in the nearby islands. Wouldn't I be looking for trouble then?"

Thus, it was still necessary to find a suitable place in which he could settle his physical body.

Fang Yuan did not even consider Nine Extremes Mountain an ideal location.

Although the defences there were strong, it was a place that was not difficult to locate! It was a place that could capitulate if one had the resolve and resources to make it happen!

"When a true BOSS goes into closed-door cultivation, he does not tell anyone nor stay at his old quarters. Otherwise, this might give others a chance to prey on him...many have died from their carelessness regarding this issue throughout history."

Fang Yuan laughed coldly.

He knew that he probably would not be too concerned if he came out of his closed-door cultivation to find that Nine Extreme Mountain had been destroyed.

As long as there were people around him, he would be able to rally them to his side.

"The Ancient One actually dared to make such a gamble. Could it be that he had made a new discovery?"

The Ancient One had left Fang Yuan fuming at his actions.

There was nothing wrong with dream masters engaging in dream-traversing but the Ancient One had betrayed Da Qian with his actions!

Heaven's Will would punish him in due course!

To some extent, Fang Yuan had forced the Ancient One to make

that gamble. However, Fang Yuan had a feeling that the Ancient One had already been entertaining the thought of it for a while. Fang Yuan merely provided the decisive push.

"To be honest, I can't say that it was a wrong decision..."

Fang Yuan let out a long sigh.

The Da Qian world had undoubtedly moved towards the Demonic Heart Realm. Fang Yuan had already done his best by growing Green Elemental Grass all over the place.

The Purple Eye Realm had been salvaged from the world-ending crisis but there was no guarantee that there would not be a second time.

As long as the source in the Demonic Heart Realm continued to exist, there was no running away!

"Da Qian has been tainted by the Demonic Heart elemental energy and can no longer break free. However, there is still hope for the Ancient Realm! Especially...since the Ancient One had lost his sage title and became a True Elemental spiritual knight. He has nothing to lose."

"He had taken this opportunity to escape Da Qian and the influence of the Demonic Heart Realm. He also managed to harvest some of the Ancient Realm's energy. Who knows, he might even regain his sagacity."

Fang Yuan had grasped the Ancient One's plan and found it to be sound. It was a rather impressive attempt to start anew.

No matter how powerful the higher beings or sages were, they would abandon ship if the ship they were on met with a mishap.

"To think that I had forced the Ancient One to strengthen his resolve."

Fang Yuan had mixed feelings about this.

The fact that the Ancient One was willing to gamble probably

meant that there was a good chance that he might succeed. He had given his everything to the Ancient Realm and had won its favour as a result. The Ancient Realm now treated him the same way it treated Fang Yuan.

They were on level ground now.

Their progress in the Ancient Realm would reflect their true abilities.

It went without saying that Fang Yuan did not fear the Ancient One at all.

The Ancient One was not even Fang Yuan's match back in Da Qian, much less in the Ancient Realm.

The key was to be quick!

It was a race against the clock. The goal was to prevent the other party from harvesting the world's energy by seeking out his physical body and destroying it first!

Without hesitation, Fang Yuan kept the armillary sphere before disappearing into the night.

Chapter 550: The Last Witch

The Ancient Realm.

The feeling he got arriving at this place was very different from the last.

The world's defences were sturdy and had solidified into a tough wall that rejected all foreign visitors.

'The dream masters might be resourceful but they will find it extremely difficult to gain access to this world!'

Fang Yuan's willpower manifested into frost flowers that floated downwards in the air. His thoughts ran wild.

He had long been accepted by this world, which was akin to having a green card that allowed him to come and go without resistance.

'The Ancient One probably wouldn't be in the best state right now...of course, his gamble involved the abandonment of Da Qian in exchange for the Ancient Realm's acceptance.'

'The other dream masters could only hope to achieve this by paying a most painful price!'

'The last time I was here, there was a big war fought between the Xia Tribe and the Jiuli Tribe. Both sides suffered huge losses - the Xia capital sank while the Jiuli Tribe was vanquished...I wonder what the world is like today. Do the tribes of Fang Mountain still exist?'

The speed of cogitation was alarming.

In a blink, Fang Yuan's consciousness had fallen instinctively into another body.

"My head hurts!"

Fang Yuan flipped himself over and climbed out from a pile of corpses. He shook his head.

His last memory was that of numerous flags against the sky and blood and steel on the battlefield.

"Jie...is that the name of the body I've taken over?"

As the last bit of his consciousness adapted to this body, Fang Yuan stood up with a slightly heavy heart.

Bodies lay on the ground for as far as the eye could see and the ground ran red with blood. The setting sun cast shadows of a broken war chariot decorated by a half-burnt flag. The symbol on it was barely visible—a black swallow!

"Cuckoo! Cuckoo!"

Countless of crows circled overhead, delighted by the ghastly feast beneath them.

Dogs and jackals convened on the ground, their eyes darting about. They were uninvited guests.

"This war isn't over yet!"

Fang Yuan picked up a spear and looked at the bronze blade as he drew his own conclusions.

In this era, bronze was an essential resource in production and war. No matter how powerful the faction was, they would not be as wasteful as to leave their weapons lying around, not even the broken ones!

Unless...the war had not ended and this was only one of the battlefields!

"Bronze? Fine iron?"

Fang Yuan could see bronze swords and iron swords lying about. He shook his head.

"Seems like not much time had passed since the last time. At least iron hasn't made bronze obsolete yet!"

Regardless of whose body he had taken over, Fang Yuan had no

intention of staying on. He took a cloak off one of the corpses and pulled it over himself. After Fang Yuan had retrieved a fine iron sword lying inside the chariot for himself, he quickly left the battlefield.

Fang Yuan's tall and muscular physique, coupled with the fact that he was armed, deterred the teeth-baring jackals from messing with him. Besides, there was more than enough food lying around.

"We have to find a place to settle down...also...although this body was only knocked unconscious, it has many little wounds that require medical attention!"

Fang Yuan rubbed his temples.

At this moment, pieces of memories, as well as some dregs of feelings, assailed his senses. He had no desire to fight on.

"The most important thing is to figure out the context of the war and which side this body belonged to. Otherwise, I might die without knowing anything..."

Fang Yuan walked away from the battlefield with a smile playing on his lips.

"Will intelligent species, no matter where and when, never be free from the shadows of war?"

...

This battlefield was located in the middle of a valley. As Fang Yuan walked deeper into the mountains, he felt much more at ease.

Although the area was teeming with venomous snakes and ferocious animals, there was no way a conventional army would be able to advance so deep in. His safety was largely assured.

As for small-scale forces, Fang Yuan would be able to dispatch them with no trouble.

"Splash!"

Fang Yuan had come across a gurgling stream and began to wipe the blood stains off himself. He was thinking more clearly now and worked to organise the memories of this body that he was in.

"Jie--a citizen of Shangyi, was part of a force tasked to invade Dongyi..."

Fang Yuan had accessed the most important information regarding his body's identity.

"Shang Dynasty? According to Jie's memories, Shangyi was a large city. Its founders were of godly blood. Later, Shang managed to defeat the last leader of Xia and claimed supremacy over all the tribes and cities in the land. Thus, it became the Shang Dynasty..."

Fang Yuan looked slightly confused.

"The Shang came after the Xia? Followed by a revolution led by King Wu? Wait a minute, among the 800 cities, there seemed to be one called Zhou..."

Fang Yuan could feel the weight of history bearing down on him.

"I wonder where the Ancient One ended up. He won't recover his powers so quickly and would be planning his next move while concealed in the shadows."

Fang Yuan became solemn as he thought about his target.

"He has no idea that I'd be following so close behind. This is the best chance to catch him unaware!"

The Ancient One had abandoned his old physical form so as to keep his life. He had thrown himself completely into the Ancient Realm and would never return.

He had only done it because he was confident that Fang Yuan would not dare to match his bet.

After all, even if Fang Yuan had acquired the armillary sphere as well as the coordinates of the Ancient Realm, he had to inject the entirety of his true aura like the Ancient One into the realm in

order to avoid facing rejection.

Any rational dream master would never do that!

Hence, the Ancient One thought that he had lots of time to scheme behind the scenes.

However, what the Ancient One did not know was that Fang Yuan had long gained the approval of the Ancient Realm and was able to access the world without any trouble.

Both of them were now shrouded in darkness. Now they had to see who would emerge before the other.

"The War of Dongyi..."

Fang Yuan lapped up some of the mountain spring water as more memories surfaced in his head.

The Shang had ruled the world for 500 years at this point and bubbles of unrest were beginning to form. A new Shang King had just ascended to the throne and was a hero of the times.

The Yi in the southeast had revolted and the King had sent out his troops to deal with the turbulence.

Jie had lived in Shangyi at the time of the call-up to war.

Unfortunately, a flying rock had hit him on the back of his head on the very first battle of the war and he had keeled over.

If Fang Yuan had not dream-traversed to take control of his senses, he would have been dead.

"Strictly speaking, Jie has a rather good constitution!"

Fang Yuan examined his reflection in the stream. It was that of a tanned young man with thick brows and large eyes. A brown cloak was draped over his muscular body.

What struck Fang Yuan most was the golden glint of light in his eyes.

"The blood of the witches is active in this world. It is its world

after all..."

In actual fact, most of the higher-level bloodlines are intertwined with the soul. This gives rise to the possession of special abilities that are non-transferable, not even through blood transfusions or body switching.

Their true auras had been marked!

Thus, in the Purple Eye Realm, the Tantai family was unable to get rid of their curse through the possessor technique.

In this world, although Fang Yuan had a different physical form, the blood of witches continued to define his being.

"That's right!"

Fang Yuan cracked his knuckles.

"With this bloodline, I'll grow more rapidly than the other humans. I'll be able to strengthen my abilities and revive the divine technique of the witches."

Fang Yuan glanced at his stats board:

Name: Fang Yuan

Essence: 1.5 (100)

Spirit: 0.9 (100)

Magic: 5.0 (100)

Profession: ???

Cultivation: ???

Technique: ???

Skill: [Medicine (Level 3)], [Botany (Level 6)(Peak)], [Fiery Golden Eyes (Level 1)], [Body Seal (Ultimate form)]"

"Hmm? Even the Body Seal is here?"

Fang Yuan was slightly confused and looked at his belly.

A black mark with a shining purple spot in the middle of it had

appeared.

"Is this the real thing...or is it an illusion?"

Fang Yuan shook his head and removed his doubts.

The Body Seal carried with it the original energy of the Demonic Heart. As with distinguished bloodlines, it was intertwined with his true aura.

This meant that if the seal broke one day and unleashed the Original Energy, Fang Yuan would never be able to escape its wrath even if he possessed another body.

No matter how many physical forms he took, he would die immediately with no exceptions!

All his methods of self-preservation would be rendered useless.

"Unless..."

Fang Yuan thought hard and had an idea.

"This sort of energy has a power that transcends the laws of nature! Is it an absolute truth? What kind of concept is this?"

Fang Yuan was deep in thought for a moment before his ears suddenly pricked up. He picked up a stone and threw it outwards with all his strength.

"Crack!"

The stone whistled through the air and landed deep into the bushes.

It had hit a dark figure at the back of its head and it collapsed onto the ground. Fang Yuan pulled it up by its ear.

"I was just thinking about dinner and here it is."

This unfortunate fellow was a grey rabbit. Its life was over the moment it had encountered Fang Yuan. Fang Yuan cut its throat to drained its blood and skinned it before he roasted it over on a spit.

"There are a few cultivation methods in the Ancient Realm. It is

not a good idea to tap on the methods of the Xia Tribe because they carry with them the marks of the other worlds. Hence, my only viable path is probably to use the witch path."

After he had eaten his fill, Fang Yuan sat cross-legged and took in a deep breath.

The blood of witches coursing through his veins was amazing. It was actually gaining strength.

"After all, this is truly the blood of the witches. I will have to carry on their legacy..."

Although the Jiuli Tribe in the Ancient Realm had gone extinct, their bloodline, albeit diluted, lives on. Hence, most of the tribes carried Jiuli blood in their bodies to some extent.

From a cultural aspect, their civilisation had been assimilated. The tribe had been annihilated.

Now, Fang Yuan, who carried the blood of the witches as well as the weight of their legacy, was the last witch of this world!

Chapter 551: The Yeomen

"The way of the witches is rooted in the strengthening of the bloodline as well as..."

Fang Yuan sat cross-legged and contemplated the differences between the present world and its past.

The Ancient One had harvested a wave of energy from the old Ancient Realm, which left it gravely damaged. When the Realm Alliance and the Hidden Dragon Guards were involved in a violent conflict, the Ancient Realm had taken the opportunity to achieve independence. The Realm was determined to never return to its old state. It organised an internal purge while foreigners were denied entry.

The marks of the Da Qian dream masters had been cleared away and all that was left was the dao that truly belonged to this world.

"Every world has its own expansion pathways and power systems. One would not necessarily die if they propagated energy from elsewhere but they would most definitely face many obstacles while doing so and might even incur divine retribution!"

"Of course...if one managed to succeed, it would be a peaceful evolution and would earn him much merit! It is still an invasion of the world though..."

...

Dozens of thoughts surfaced in Fang Yuan's mind.

"In this realm...what should I do other than to pursue the Ancient One? How should I proceed with harvesting energy from the world?"

After all, the Realm had been kind to him. Fang Yuan was unwilling to cut directly into the energy source of the world and then leave with the loot just like that.

"Compromising the interests of other people will foster hatred. The best way to go about this is to offer benefits to everyone..."

Fang Yuan had made up his mind.

"No matter what, I will have to get to know this place better!"

Although Jie was a citizen and could live within the city walls, he was too ignorant!

Especially regarding secret histories and the legacies of power.

"What I can do now is to leave this battlefield for the Shang capital...I could even go to Fang Mountain if it is close by..."

Fang Yuan was also interested in visiting the tribe that he had founded on a whim. He wanted to know how they were doing.

Regarding the punishment of deserters, Fang Yuan was not bothered by this issue at all.

After all, Jie was a lone ranger with no kin left. There was nothing that held him back from living life on his own terms.

Besides, Fang Yuan was prepared to give up on Jie's past and start afresh in this world as a new person.

"This world...shares some similarities with the Former Qin era in my memories and yet they are different...I just can't put a finger on these differences..."

Fang Yuan thought back to the strange occurrences in the Ancient Realm.

"Could it be...that there is a higher-dimensional world of the same type as the Demonic Heart Realm exerting its influence on this realm?"

This was the guiding principle that illustrated the effect that the Demonic Heart Realm had on its subsidiary realms which included Da Qian.

"It's happening on a higher level though...the Demonic Heart

Realm projects power while that higher-dimensional world projects history and culture?"

Fang Yuan had a sudden thought.

"Now that I think about it...that higher-dimensional world is probably the same place that was featured in my dreams. Or could it be that the world in my dreams had been influenced by that higher-dimensional world?"

Fang Yuan used to have recurring dreams of himself in another world back when he was still young.

This could be due to his dream-traversing abilities or it might even have something to do with reincarnation, which caused these memories to surface.

Thus, Fang Yuan had always considered that world in his dreams his homeland.

"I now have some clues about my homeland..."

Fang Yuan clenched his fists tightly.

His main goal in life was to climb his way up to the top of the world and find out more about his homeland in the process.

Now that he had made lots of progress in these aspects, it was a cause for celebration indeed.

"Seems like I'm getting a better idea about why the Ancient Realm has accepted me..."

Fang Yuan raised a brow suddenly. He had sensed a disturbance.

"Sigh..."

He exhaled and stood up with his iron sword firmly in his grip.

The sword was about 3 feet long and had a hemp wrap on its hilt, giving it secure non-slip grip. Intricate carvings of strange beasts adorned its blade.

"This must be the sword of a yeoman. It is not something that a

commoner can possess!"

Fang Yuan had drawn a conclusion upon seeing the sword for the first time.

In this era, a man who could ride to war in a chariot was probably a man of status.

At this moment, Fang Yuan maintained a good upright posture while holding his sword. He watched on as the bushes swayed and uncovered a few human figures.

"Who are you?"

The stranger wore black robes that were torn and tattered, revealing several bloody wounds. He was in an extremely miserable state and had probably followed the path of the stream to arrive here. Bumping into Fang Yuan had obviously surprised him.

"A Shang citizen?"

The two of them stared at each other and recognised that they were both from Shang.

After all, the Dongyi people were barbaric and very much like the Jiuli tribesmen. They would not be wearing clothes nor have their hair tied up into a man bun.

The man questioning Fang Yuan was undoubtedly of noble birth. He wore fine clothes and carried a jade pendant at his waist.

"Hey! What an insolent person. This is a yeoman from the army. Salute him and report your name now!"

Another man had jumped out of the bushes to accost Fang Yuan.

"Yeoman?"

Fang Yuan was slightly baffled.

"Was this rank already in use back during the Shang era? Wait a minute...this world does not follow the Former Qin timeline.

Having been influenced by foreign civilisations, the Xia Dynasty adopted feudalism and it would be no wonder that there were yeomen in the Shang period."

The 'yeomen' were the lowest ranked members of the ruling class. They were noblemen of the Shang Dynasty and lorded over commoners like Jie.

Nevertheless, this social system was only supposed to be developed in the Zhou era and widely adopted during the Spring and Autumn period. Its current presence in the Shang period was way ahead of its time.

"Has feudalism developed fully?"

A thought entered Fang Yuan's mind. Feudalism involved granting land to nobles in exchange for their services or labour.

The knights of Europe and the samurai of Japan were the most basic units of the feudal system. In Shang, they had the yeoman!

"The yeomen were exempted from conscription but would become commanders if they chose to pursue a military career. They had excellent prospects in academia too and would enjoy prestige wherever they chose to go ...above the yeoman in the social hierarchy were the gentlemen bureaucrats, the gentlemen ministers and the noble lords. The Shang King himself sat on the apex!"

A relevant memory had materialised in Fang Yuan's mind.

'Explains the attitude. This fellow is a nobleman!'

"Never mind..."

The yeoman was straightforward and waved a hand.

"Our army has just suffered a great defeat and this soldier is new. We can excuse him for being absent-minded...my name is Meng Kuo, a centurion in the army. Who is your immediate superior? Hmm?"

The man was about to sit down when he uttered an exclamation upon noticing the iron sword in Fang Yuan's hand.

"This is...my Brother Meng Guang's sword. How did you get hold of it?"

"How dare you!"

The accompanying soldier shouted accusingly.

"He must have stolen it!"

"Enough...if my brother's sword isn't with him, he must have already fallen in battle...my heart! How it hurts!"

Meng Kuo's eyes had reddened and a look of anguish crossed his face. Still, he remained rational in spite of his pain and did not accuse Fang Yuan of killing his brother and taking the sword.

At this point, it would have been appreciated if Fang Yuan decided to return the sword and offered his condolences.

Unfortunately, Fang Yuan would never part with something that he had obtained through skill. He would only part with some words of comfort.

"I had picked up this sword by chance. Your brother might still be alive. Don't get too worked up..."

'This fellow...'

Meng Kuo was a tolerant man but Fang Yuan's attitude was making him feel uncomfortable.

Anyone could see that Fang Yuan was being quite difficult.

"You..."

The accompanying soldier was preparing to rail at Fang Yuan when an object flew out of the forest and embedded itself in his neck. It was a dart.

"Pshh...Poof!"

Blood spurted out from the soldier's neck wound as he collapsed

onto the ground with a stunned look on his face.

"There are pursuing soldiers?"

Meng Kuo's expression changed.

"It's the blowgunmen of Dongyi!"

The Dongyi people were barbarians that were unversed in the art of smelting. However, they were adept users of the blowgun and utilised poisonous darts, making them formidable guerilla fighters.

The Shang army had been undefeated right until they advanced right into the forest ambush of the Dongyi fighters, who had used the land to their advantage.

The collapsed soldier's face was blackening from the poison. He was not going to make it.

The dart sticking out of his neck had a tail of colourful feathers that danced in the wind. It was a chilling sight.

"The enemy...is catching up!"

Meng Kuo was stupefied.

More figures had emerged from the shadows of the forest. There was at least a dozen of them. On the contrary, there were only a few defenders. It was going to be a walkover.

"At the start...I was the only deserter, which definitely wouldn't warrant the pursuit of these agents...they are after the nobleman Meng Kuo...they must have been following him the whole time!"

Fang Yuan scanned his surroundings.

"How bothersome!"

Fan Yuan flicked the blade of the iron sword impatiently.

"We'll fend them off. Let our lord leave first!"

Meng Kuo's subordinate had spoken. He seemed to imply that as a foot soldier, it was Fang Yuan's duty to give up his life for the protection of the nobleman.

"How can I leave my men behind? If we have to fight to the death today, so be it!"

Meng Kuo drew his sword and roared.

"Charge!"

A flurry of poisonous darts flew out. Another two of Meng Kuo's men fell dead to the ground.

"It's fine if you want a fight to the death, but have you considered that we might not want to join you?"

Fang Yuan stood by with a cold look on his face. At this moment, a blowgunman shot a dart towards him.

"You must be tired of living!"

He brandished the iron sword and deflected the dart with ease.

Meng Kuo, who was on the ground, watched with amazement as Fang Yuan displayed his technique.

"I shall grant your death wishes!"

Fang Yuan charged into the forest and whipped up a storm of blood as he swished his sword.

Although Fang Yuan was still getting used to his new body, dealing with these attackers was elementary.

Meng Kuo could not believe his eyes.

"What a warrior! A warrior of the first class! Such abilities would be greatly regarded wherever he went. A yeoman rank would definitely be bestowed upon him together with money and gifts. No wonder he paid no heed to me when we first met!"

Chapter 552: Dongyi

"Is this the strength of a typical person?"

Within the jungle, swords shimmered and many surrounded him.

Stretching his finger out casually, he caused their blood to spurt out. None of the blood managed to land on him.

Although Meng Kuo did not suspect that he was mutated, he was in awe at Fang Yuan's bravery and strength.

"Whoosh!"

Fang Yuan's sword sliced the throat of the last fighter of Dongyi and the blood splattered everywhere. "This is definitely different from the Xia empire. I have new abilities now!"

"Warrior! Hold up!"

Meng Kuo leapt to his feet.

"What now? Do you have something to say?"

Fang Yuan looked towards Meng Kuo as his metal sword reflected the sunlight.

Meng Kuo placed his hands on his chest and took a deep bow. "I am deeply thankful for your assistance in saving my life. Please, let me know your name!"

"My name? I'm Jie!"

Fang Yuan smiled. "You don't have to repay me for what I've done. I'll take this sword as my reward!"

He was already walking away as he spoke.

"Wait up!"

Meng Kuo chased after Fang Yuan. "Where are you heading to? This is not the direction of our Shang Army camp..."

"Who says I'm returning to the camp?"

Fang Yuan casually responded. "Now that our army is defeated, I'm returning!"

"We are not defeated!"

As soon as Meng Kuo heard Fang Yuan, he raised his voice and continued to convince Fang Yuan. "This is but a small defeat. Compared to the large scale of things, what will this count as?"

He looked towards Fang Yuan with passion in his eyes. "Jie! You have such powerful abilities as a warrior! Why are you leaving? This is the best opportunity to accomplish something! Are you unhappy with being a mere trooper? I can promote you! As long as you have accomplishments, you will be promoted to become a nobleman!"

"..."

Fang Yuan was speechless.

If he was the actual Jie, he would've accepted the offer to become a nobleman for it would have been his lifelong dream.

The tables had turned around and this resembled the democratic society of the West. Everyone would want to have such an opportunity to be promoted so easily.

To Fang Yuan, he knew that this was but a useless title.

"I've said that I no longer want to fight. Don't you understand me?"

Meng Kuo froze in his steps. He knew that if he were to say anything more, his brother's sword might just plunge into his own chest.

"Alright... Since you insist, I shall not try to persuade you to stay..."

Meng Kuo felt a tinge of pity.

Fang Yuan gave him a satisfied expression and casually asked Meng Kuo. "Do you know where is Fang Mountain? Which tribe is currently occupying that place?"

"Fang Mountain?"

Meng Kuo was stunned and he started to give a weird expression. "How can you not know!"

"Why should I know?"

Fang Yuan continued to probe further. It was already fortunate enough that the body he was possessing knew the general situation of the realm. How would it be able to know for certain the situation of specific tribes?

"Fang Mountain is the old capital of Shang[1]!"

Meng Kuo continued to mumble the details. "Long time ago, the Heavenly Bird gave birth to Shang. He then had a son named Qi, who was named the leader of the tribe. Afterwards, the son of Qi lead the people of Shang to the plains and defeated the last king of Xia, taking over as the king in the process. 400 years ago, the Shang Empire had shifted to the capital, but Fang Mountain was still regarded as holy ground. It contained the entire cultivation of the witch doctors and priests, and the past few kings were also buried there..."

As he spoke, he came to a realisation that this person before him had the average look of a commoner but was much more powerful than he seemed. It was already a miracle if this person were to know what was happening around here, let alone the situation at Fang Mountain.

"The Heavenly Bird gave birth to Shang?"

To Fang Yuan, this was a piece of shocking news.

"Also... Fang Mountain resulted in the Shang Empire? Does this mean I am responsible for the creation of the Empire?"

Fang Yuan was stunned beyond words. "I am the ancestor of Shang? Alright... Although it is just a title, I still feel incredible..."

Unknowingly, as soon as Fang Yuan heard the tale of the Heavenly Bird giving birth to Shang, he immediately thought of the reckless young girl. Could they be related?

It was a pity that 500 years had passed by just like this. The young girl would have become a pile of ashes by now.

"Jie... you?"

Meng Kuo started to feel suspicious about Fang Yuan's expression.

"I wonder how's the progress of our invasion towards Dongyi?"

Fang Yuan snapped out of his trance and changed the topic.

"This..."

Meng Kuo smiled sheepishly. "How else can it be? It is but a minor setback and will not get in the way of the plan."

He was brimming with confidence. After all, compared to the civilisation and culture of the realm now, 'Dongyi' was just a mere belligerent tribe!

With superior combat power, how could the Shang Empire possibly lose? They would at most take a little longer to overcome Dongyi.

Even the name 'Dongyi' was just a nickname given to them. On the vast plains, there were numerous rebellious tribes and they were not united. Therefore, they were given the title 'Dongyi'.

Therefore, the conquest of the Shang Empire was but a routine daily invasion of the tribes.

Even if the Shang Empire were to succeed, after retreating, these tribes would come out of hiding once more to create trouble.

"Although we are encountering a minor setback, our pure combat

power will be enough for us to claim victory. By then, we will return with glory!"

Meng Kuo seemed conflicted.

It was only normal for a man to thirst success. However, considering that the situation in Dongyi was war-torn and that Meng Kuo had lost his brother, it was natural for him to have thoughts about returning home.

However, even if they were to deal with Dongyi successfully, they would have to return in another few years to ensure order. This was the price to pay if they wanted to rule over such vast lands!

The uprising of rebels all around was in an attempt to contest for the supremacy of the king. The empire could only act harshly against them to restore order!

Fang Yuan listened on and a smile started to spread across his face.

'Although I know that the Shang Empire is doing this to ensure that it stays in power and at the same time maintain peace and order, it is unwise to always fight battles like these which will not benefit the empire in any way. Even if the empire were to win these small wars, their army would be severely exhausted. Dongyi is now like quicksand, grabbing on tightly on the Shang Empire's leg and self-sacrificing its own people to induce strong emotions in everyone!'

'When the people are displeased, the rebels will take the opportunity to strike back. No matter how powerful the Shang army is, they will still suffer great losses as they traverse through the entire Dongyi. By then, with a single command, everyone in the vicinity will gather in response to deal with the army united. With that, they might just stand a chance to take down the entire Shang army. If that really happens, the downfall of the Shang Empire will follow suit in no time.'

All of these were nothing new.

Giving it some thought, Fang Yuan could roughly figure out what would potentially happen.

Furthermore, these were just dirty tricks the people of Dongyi could use. Considering how desperate the people of Dongyi were and how greedy the King of Shang could be amidst all these victories, it was extremely likely that Fang Yuan's conjecture would happen.

"Let's go!"

Fang Yuan turned around and tapped Meng Kuo's shoulders.

"To where?"

Meng Kuo seemed confused.

"To the base camp of the Shang army, of course!" Fang Yuan spoke with confidence. "Considering how sincere you are, I will help you, albeit unwillingly, to resolve the issue at Dongyi."

"Thank you, warrior!"

Meng Kuo was elated beyond words. Both of them walked along and left the forest in a hurry. In no time, they made it to the base camp.

"It's Meng Kuo!"

"Meng Kuo is alright!"

"Quickly open the gates!"

Obviously, Meng Kuo was much highly-ranked that Fang Yuan had imagined. With his appearance, the entire camp was in cheers.

"Is that really Kuo?"

From the base camp came a few worried-looking people. "Meng Kuo, it's fortunate that you are able to return unscathed!"

"It was chaos and I had to take shelter in the forest. I'm fortunate enough to be rescued by this warrior!"

Meng Kuo explained as he started to introduce Fang Yuan to the rest of them. "This warrior single-handedly killed 10 over men and he has the courage of a hundred soldiers! I had invited him back to our camp to introduce him to Senior Fang!"

Senior Fang was the highest ranking officer around.

"The bravery of a hundred men? Able to kill 10 people single-handedly?"

Suspicious looks were seen from the people around, but soon, they turned into looks of admiration. "Since Meng Kuo has testified to it, it must be true. With the addition of such a warrior, we won't have to be worried that we cannot take down Dongyi!"

As soon as Meng Kuo entered the base camp, his expression turned to a solemn one. Occasionally, he would peer at Fang Yuan. It was obvious that he was worried Fang Yuan's recklessness might offend the higher-ups.

However, since Fang Yuan had decided to come to the base camp, he had kept his attitude to himself and was rather respectful to the people he met. Secretly, Meng Kuo was impressed.

"Take a short break, I'll inform Senior Fang of your arrival and prepare the celebrations for your victory!"

Meng Kuo brought Fang Yuan to his own tent and called for a few servants. He instructed them to treat Fang Yuan with respect before hurriedly taking his leave.

"Respectable guest, please enjoy!"

As soon as Fang Yuan was seated, the servants approached him and started to serve him food and wine.

The wine was served in bronze bowls and there was an antique vibe to everything here. The meat dishes included overcooked meat morsels and a few other varieties for Fang Yuan to choose from. All in all, this meal was nothing that Jia had ever enjoyed before as a soldier.

'Meng Kuo might be more highly ranked than I thought...'

Without further ado, Fang Yuan started to feast on the meat and wine and was enjoying himself.

As he ate, he asked the servants a few questions. These servants were under Meng Kuo and therefore did not dare to lie. Therefore, Fang Yuan managed to obtain answers for all his questions, thereby allowing him to gain more pieces of crucial information.

For instance, the person in charge of this base camp was an Auxiliary Officer and had about 5,000 men under his charge.

The army of the Shang Empire was divided into various battalions. This particular battalion was led by Senior Fang and he had many yeomen assisting him. As of now, they were merely testing the combat power of Dongyi and had successive victories. Today was the first time they had experienced a setback, albeit a minor one.

Chapter 553: Murderer

"From how things look, the people of Shang are rather hardy!"

Fang Yuan gulped the entire cup of sour wine and thought to himself.

The wine he was drinking was low in alcohol content and could not make him drunk. It was more like a cocktail.

Ever since he realised that the Shang people were created by him, he could feel a sense of familiarity with them.

Of course, it was only a tiny bit.

This sense of familiarity could at most make him help the Shang people out a little, but that was all.

"Jie..."

Meng Kuo entered the tent and had an uncomfortable expression on his face.

"Is there a problem out there?"

Fang Yuan wiped his mouth.

"Sigh... Senior Fang is unwilling to see you and had declined the possibility of rewarding you!"

Meng Kuo seemed jaded as he punched towards the table. "Someone is spreading untrue rumours against us in the dark. Senior Fang doesn't believe what I've said. He thinks that we have killed those 10 men together when it is actually all your effort. Because of this, I've lost a few fighters..."

"I see!"

Fang Yuan nodded his head but did not continue.

Why would he care about rewards from a lowly official?

He had come here to see the Shang army for himself, and at the same time, find out if there were powerful men here.

With such a large scale war, both sides would have to display their utmost might, right?

Fang Yuan was a tough nut to crack. He stared at Meng Kuo for a moment. It was impossible for them to even think of manipulating Fang Yuan.

However, if they really had such intentions, then it would be their mistake.

The heightened sense of dream masters led Fang Yuan to realise that Meng Kuo was speaking the truth.

On the next day, the people of Dongyi rode on their victorious momentum and arrived at the camp of the Shang army.

The Shang army started to form a defensive formation outside the camp as they awaited for the enemy's arrival.

Fang Yuan followed behind Meng Kuo and observed the army.

Things were evolving in this realm.

Compared to the Xia reign, the Shang army was more organised and well-trained. What had caught Fang Yuan's attention the most were the hundreds of chariots in the middle.

As the star of this war, the collective appearance of these chariots gave the Shang army an immense boost to their military capabilities.

Fang Yuan looked on with interest and realised that these chariots were crafted from bronze and wood. There were two carriages in front of each chariot which was able to accommodate 3 people. The one in the centre was the charioteer, while the ones on the left and right wielded a bow and a long dagger respectively. A few infanters escorted every chariot.

With a hundred of these chariots, normal troops would not even stand a chance.

Meng Kuo was full of pride as he looked on. "The Shang Empire is

the ruler of the lands with 10,000 chariots! Dongyi is a mere disturbance that will be easily dealt with!"

Fang Yuan's mind started to wander. '10,000 chariots will mean that there are 30,000 people! Adding up the number of infanters, this army will be about 100,000-men strong! Is this the strength of the strongest country in the realm?'

Although the Shang Empire was the most powerful influence in the realm with King Shang as the only ruler of the empire, other countries still do exist, and each and every one of them had their own abilities. They seemed to only submit to the current king, but things might change when the king steps down.

The invasion of Shang army into Dongyi was a demonstration of power to the other countries.

Of course, this was only a small punishment for Dongyi. If the Shang Empire really wanted to wipe out the entire Dongyi, King Shang would have to personally lead the war.

Even so, the sight of the numerous chariots and soldiers would give anyone the jitters.

"Even though we suffered a minor setback yesterday, we are still superior to Dongyi... Those in front are but a few small divisions of Dongyi and they only amount to about 10,000 of them. Their weapons are also inferior to ours. How dare they go against our army? They're clueless!"

Meng Kuo had experience in weaponry and started to comment.

"Indeed..."

Fang Yuan observed the Dongyi army. They were not even organised and it was almost unbearable to look at.

Furthermore, as they arrived closer, a loud commotion could be heard. It was as though this army would crumble with a simple coordinated attack.

On the battlefield, victory was not dependent on how huge an army was.

Although there were significantly lesser troops in the Shang army, the Shang army appeared confident and steadfast. On the opposite end, the Dongyi army seemed divided. Anyone could easily guess which side would emerge victorious.

"Are the people of Dongyi that stupid?"

Fang Yuan was a little shocked.

The soldiers of Dongyi which he saw just yesterday in the forest were cunning men and were totally different from the Dongyi army today.

"Dongyi can be classified into 30 big divisions, and 36 smaller divisions within each division. They are not unified and as of now, we are up against the combined forces of 3 smaller divisions..."

Meng Kuo started to explain. "To be able to come up with these numbers is already no easy feat!"

"Alright!"

Fang Yuan was speechless. He gazed towards the battlefield.

Among the opposition's army, a single chariot slowly made its way forward and arrived before the Shang army. It was as though it was taunting the entire army.

"Taunting us?"

He was a little shocked. "Is this how things are right now? Oh! Something's not right! This is the presence of supernormal forces in this realm! This is a warrior with supernatural strength. Naturally, they were comparable and this could be the benchmark to decide who would be victorious."

"I am Guan Zhongbao from Dongyi. Who dares challenge me?"

The brute man who came forward steered the carriage with a single hand. His other hand was waving a battleaxe as he

demonstrated his shocking martial arts.

'Oh, this person is above the average warrior. Do I finally get to witness some impressive martial arts?'

Fang Yuan's eyes glistened as he watched on.

No one could withstand such a taunt! Not long after, a chariot rolled out steadily from the Shang army with a warrior steering it from above. "Don't be cocky you thief! Face our wrath!"

"Rumble!"

The two chariots advanced forward and passed by each other.

Following a laughter from Guan Zhongbao, his axe was tainted with blood.

The warrior who stood out against him had a huge wound before his chest and blood was dripping from it. He fell from his chariot and the Shang army became silent in an instant. It was as though the entire army was held by the throat.

"This Guan Zhongbao is indeed one of the most powerful humans I've ever seen..."

Fang Yuan's eyes widened as he paid more attention to him.

At this point in time, among the soldiers, Senior Fang was passing down certain orders and another chariot steadily rolled out.

"Hmph! Lowly junior, face your death!"

Guan Zhongbao was still excited from his previous victory. His eyes turned red and he swung his battleaxe without fear.

"Whoosh!"

Two other chariots quickly arrived next to him. They were close enough to see the ferocious and cunning expression of Guan Zhongbao.

At this point in time, a warrior of the Shang army started to

wield his sword.

The sound of the metallic sword led to the change in expression of the enemies and allies alike.

"Whoosh!"

With a glitter, the sword started to grow in size, as though it was a slithering green snake.

"Glittering sword?!"

Fang Yuan thought of an apt name for the sword.

As the two chariots rolled past each other once more, this time, it was Guan Zhongbao's palm which started to bleed. Without another word, he turned around and left.

"Thief, you shall die!"

The warrior shouted and the sword in his hands turned into a black dragon which flew out of his hands. It pierced through Guan Zhonbao from his back and emerged from his chest, pinning him dead on his own chariot!

This sword seemed to have heavenly powers!

"Great!"

Meng Kuo was stunned for a moment before starting to cheer. "That is Gentleman Jiu. I've heard that he had a unique encounter in the past and had learnt a unique set of swordplay skills. It's impressive indeed!"

"Gentleman... Jiu?"

Fang Yuan gazed towards the young man with the sword and nodded his head.

This person's skills in swordplay were indeed extraordinary and had a dao of its own.

However, it gave Fang Yuan a sense of familiarity. It reminded him of the martial arts in Da Qian.

"Such swordplay skills are likely to have been passed down since the Xia Empire! Is it now native to this realm ever since Da Qian took control of the realm?"

As Fang Yuan thought to himself, the Shang army started to cheer once more, irritating the Dongyi army in the process.

With the neigh of a horse, a person rushed out of the crowd. Meng Kuo scoffed. "These people are indeed uncivilised brutes with no manners!"

"If I were you, I would start to think about how to convince that Gentleman to our side..."

Fang Yuan replied coldly.

"What?"

Meng Kuo was in shock. With that, he watched on as Gentleman Jiu remained unfazed against this sudden attack. Wielding his sword, he was ready again.

The person riding the horse was extremely skilled in horse riding and wielded a long spear. He was conservative as the both of them tested each other out.

"Go!"

Suddenly, Gentleman Jiu repeated the same trick and the sword started to glitter.

The person riding the horse quickly retreated.

"Where do you think you're going!"

Gentleman Jiu's face was flushed as he chased after the horse. The sword in his hand was about to fly out.

"Hmph!"

At this point in time, the horse turned around and neighed.

"Whoosh!"

The person blew out a streak of hot air towards Gentleman Jiu.

"Thud!"

This magical swordsman fell to the ground with almost no resistance and was swiftly captured by the people of Dongyi.

"What?"

Senior Fang witnessed everything and started to exclaim in shock. "How could Jiu be so easily dealt with? Quickly send our soldiers and rescue him back!"

The position of a Gentleman was higher than that of a yeoman and Senior Fang had to prioritise the rescue.

"Dong! Dong!"

Drums were heard as the Shang army initiated the attack. Hundreds of chariots formed a single line and advanced in unison like a flowing river.

Infanteers followed closely behind the chariots.

"Kill!"

At the same time, the Dongyi army gave the signal to charge as well.

The person who captured Gentleman Jiu led the army and he started to continuously spew out white smoke. Whoever came against the horse would undoubtedly fall off the chariot and no one could come close to the horse.

"Jie!"

Meng Kuo was on a carriage as well. He was holding a bow in his hand as he looked towards Fang Yuan, seeking assistance.

Fang Yuan was too lazy to even wield a dagger. With his empty hands, he looked towards the person with much interest.

Chapter 554: Captive

"Spiritual technique? Divine technique?"

Fang Yuan stared at the enemy general, who exhaled clouds of white mist, with interest.

This person's abilities reminded him of the witches.

Even though the blood of the witches flowed in his veins, it had been greatly diluted. His natural talent in the divine technique was only because the spiritual technique that he practised enjoyed a chemistry with his constitution and bloodline.

["General Heng and Ha?"](#)

Fang Yuan had arrived at a silent conclusion.

"He's a realm energy practitioner!"

Meng Kuo palmed his fist.

"These Dongyi people have actually managed to enlist the help of realm energy practitioners?"

'Realm energy practitioners? Could this become a system to be developed by the world in the future?'

Fang Yuan looked at Meng Kuo.

"What are realm energy practitioners?"

"Jie...this isn't the right time to ask questions."

Meng Kuo loosed a few arrows with his bow with a helpless look on his face.

"After we win this battle, I'll tell you everything!"

"Alright, I'll hold you to it!"

Fang Yuan snatched the whip over from the charioteer and rushed towards the enemy general.

The white mists enveloping the general were intimidating. None

of the Shang men had dared to approach him, giving him free rein to wreak havoc.

He laughed out coldly when he saw Meng Kuo's approaching chariot.

"Here comes someone with a death wish!"

The enemy general manoeuvred his spear and thrust it towards the chariot.

"Dang!"

Fang Yuan parried the blow with his sword. A dark gleam rushed along the blade of the sword as it split the spear into two parts.

"Impressive!"

The enemy general was shocked but recovered himself quickly. He exhaled another cloud of white mist and pounced towards Fang Yuan.

'Actually...this person is merely an amateur. That trick he is doing with the white mist is but a simple trick of deception. Still, I cannot reveal my abilities yet...'

Considering the power level of Fang Yuan's divine soul and true aura, he could probably resist the combined efforts of the real Generals Heng and Ha to take him down.

Nevertheless, Fang Yuan had to conceal his true powers. He quickly grabbed the charioteer over and used him as a human shield.

"Thump!"

The white mist had caused the charioteer to fall unconscious to the ground.

At this point, Fang Yuan threw out his sword in a deadly piercing move.

"Slash!"

The enemy general barely avoided the full brunt of sword slash. A large gash had been torn into his shoulder. He fell off his horse and tried to make a run for it.

"No one escapes me!"

Fang Yuan drove the chariot after him and thrust the sword forward once more. This time, it sank into the face of the enemy general.

"Ughh..."

The enemy fell to the ground and was taken alive by Fang Yuan.

"Jie has taken the enemy!"

Meng Kuo lifted up his bow with a shout when he saw Fang Yuan's catch.

"Jie has taken the enemy!"

The surrounding Shang soldiers who had witnessed the events echoed after Meng Kuo and broke out into cheers of jubilation. The morale of the soldiers had received a great boost.

"Jie? A true warrior!"

Senior Fang and the other officials watched on with a multitude of expressions but all of them were impressed.

"The Guru has been captured!"

"The Guru has been defeated!"

In contrast to the Shang, consternation broke out within the ranks of the Dongyi warriors as they made a confused and hasty retreat.

"Chase them down! Chase them down!"

Upon seeing the rout of the Dongyi army, Senior Fang ordered the Shang soldiers to pursue them without hesitation.

The Shang soldiers were more ferocious than the Dongyi soldiers to begin with. They had experienced losses earlier on because the

Dongyi general had intimidated them with his brash confidence.

Now that they were rid of this factor, the Shang soldiers began to mount their counter-attack.

"Charge!"

Fang Yuan and Meng Kuo both took a chariot and rode towards the enemy. As they drove the horses along, they mowed down the enemy soldiers in their way. Meng Kuo was especially awesome as he loosed streams of arrows at the enemy.

"It's a pity that there aren't any other powerful figures!"

Fang Yuan could not be bothered to count the number of Dongyi soldiers he had cut down. He was slightly disappointed that he had not managed to find another opponent who was capable of displaying a divine technique.

The scorching sun illuminated the chaotic battlefield.

The rout of the Dongyi army was a disastrous affair and the Shang soldiers had all but destroyed them.

In the end, the Shang army had defeated the Bai, Yue and Shan Dongyi divisions. They had killed two thousand enemy soldiers and had captured another three thousand. It was an overwhelming victory.

Later that night, the camp bathed in the soft glow of numerous lanterns as well as the aroma of roast beef and lamb. A large banquet had been thrown in the army camp to celebrate the victory, where the Shang soldiers made merry and revelled in food and wine.

"Is this supposed to be the greatest army in the world?"

Fang Yuan was speechless as he observed the party.

"If the enemy could exploit the current laxness of the Shang army and launch a night attack, one thousand people would be sufficient to bring this army to its knees. Of course...we can't expect much

from the armies of the Shang era..."

After all, this was the Pre-Qin period, where people were more simple and naive.

Besides, these armies were not professional but were made up of slaves. The military training that they underwent was a cursory one and their main occupation was farming the land.

"The standard of the Pre-Qin armies was comparable to the armies of the Europe Middle Ages...there was no such thing as military discipline. It was a time where armies simply won by being less incompetent than their rivals..."

Fang Yuan shook his head and walked over to his tent.

Ever since Fang Yuan had displayed his martial prowess on the battlefield, the Shang treated him respectfully and provided him with a splendid tent as well as servants. Fang Yuan entered his tent to see that there was bound captive in the corner.

According to the Shang way, Fang Yuan's captive belonged to him. It was up to Fang Yuan whether he wanted to kill the captive, sell the captive or even set him free.

Fang Yuan sat down cross-legged behind his table and examined the bound captive.

The captive looked to be in his forties. He was square-jawed, large-eared and had an upturned nose. His features were crude, even ugly. His eyes were tightly shut and he looked like he had not yet regained consciousness.

"Alright, stop pretending!"

Fang Yuan drained the content of his bronze wine vessel and spoke in an indifferent manner.

"I know that you're awake and are looking for a way to escape..."

"Argh!"

Fang Yuan had just finished speaking when the burly captive

roared and snapped the ropes bounding him. At that moment, he looked like a leopard who had been rudely awoken and sprang towards Fang Yuan.

"Hmph!"

A sharp blast of air shot out from his nostrils and flew towards Fang Yuan like a dart.

The burly man seemed so sure that Fang Yuan would not be able to escape his attack and would fall into his hands.

However, in the next moment, the blast of air hit Fang Yuan and dissipated harmlessly. Fang Yuan raised his left hand and smacked the large man to the ground.

"How was it? Do you want to try me again? Death will be the outcome of your next failed attempt!"

Fang Yuan said in a calm voice.

"Never mind. Having fallen into the hands of a realm energy practitioner, I, Hei Zhong, will accept my fate!"

The burly man gritted his teeth.

"Is it so? I can set you free. Just get all your masters to avenge you! I'll take on every single one of them!"

Fang Yuan said with a gleeful smile.

"Hmph! Although I don't understand what you're playing at, do your worst!"

"Hmm?"

Fang Yuan was taken aback.

"Are you not going to scare me with the name of your master, or try to get into my good books? Life is precious!"

"I don't have any masters. My divine technique was imparted to me by a stranger that I met in my youth."

Hei Zhong was obviously not very bright and Fang Yuan

managed to find out all about him within a short time.

Hei Zhong has had an unusually large appetite since he was young and frequented the mountains in his quests for food.

One time, he had encountered a ferocious tiger and had bumped into a figure in his escape. The figure had saved his life by chasing the tiger away and upon seeing that he had some talent, proceeded to teach him a technique.

This technique was a little deceptive trick but was effective in hunting for small game and scaring away larger beasts. Hei Zhong developed his skills in the technique such that it became a formidable white mist that could rival divine techniques.

However, since then, he had never seen his benefactor ever again.

As his reputation grew, the Dongyi lured him to their camp with gifts and enlisted him to fight the Shang.

'Sigh...'

Fang Yuan was unhappy now that he had found out all that he wanted to know. Fang Yuan had wanted to become acquainted with other realm energy practitioners and powerful beings through his captive.

It was a pity that he had failed even before he had gotten started.

"What a fool. I'll probably either sell or kill you!"

Fang Yuan's expressions were cold.

His interest in the systems of the realm energy practitioners had been piqued.

It was thanks to Meng Kuo that Fang Yuan had a better understanding of the background of the realm energy practitioners now.

"Five hundred years ago when the Xia still ruled the world, the prevailing cultivation technique was the Da Qian way. However, it

was revised by the dream masters and became impure. The other supernatural force was witchcraft. Of course, there might be a small group of priests as well..."

"The rise of realm energy practitioners followed centuries later. They believed that heaven and earth were made up of original essence, which turned into elemental force over time! Thus, the point of cultivation was to purify the elemental force into original essence so that one could trace its source and achieve immortality!

He had to admit that this was similar to how Da Qian's elemental force worked.

In Fang Yuan's opinion, this was the embryonic form of the celestial dao.

"Unbelievable. The celestial dao has been developed in only five hundred years...of course, taking into account primeval rituals and methods of worship, there is also the god dao!"

"Celestial dao, god dao and witchcraft dao...are these the native power systems that have been set up in this world? Wait a minute...perhaps there should be another addition - demon dao!"

Fang Yuan could not help but remember the time he had to deal with Wu Zhiqi, Xiang Liu and company during the Great Flood. Although they were part of the Hidden Dragon Guards, they were of the demon race!

Displayed on Fang Yuan's face was a mix of emotions. Hei Zhong looked at Fang Yuan's unreadable expression and was overcome by fear. He dropped his tough guy act and blurted out a plea for mercy.

"Wait a minute. You could let someone redeem me or let me stay on as your slave. Please spare my life!"

Two generals of the Shang Dynasty in chinese mythology

Chapter 555: Kui Ox

"What a change. Weren't you acting tough just now?"

Fang Yuan shook his head at the sight of the grovelling Hei Zhong.

"Never mind...I can see that you're well built and would make a good slave. You would probably fetch a good price!"

"No...you're the only one I'm willing to serve. I won't submit to anyone else!"

Hei Zhong rolled his eyes and shouted out again.

"I think...you must be hatching another scheme, am I right?"

Fang Yuan could see through his little tricks and exposed them curtly.

"Your life is in my hands and yet you want to bargain?"

"I'm not a common slave. If you would use me, I will acknowledge you as my master! Your wish would be my command!"

"Then you are going to learn my divine techniques secretly?"

Hei Zhong's face turned red after Fang Yuan uncovered his true motive.

"You are a realm energy practitioner. I accept my loss and will become your slave with no regrets. I have no intention of learning anything without permission!"

"Forget it...you are a fool that can't even lie properly! You may rise!"

Fang Yuan waved a hand.

"Imparting martial arts to you isn't out of the question. Fine, I'll take you in as my slave."

"Thank you so much, master!"

Hei Zhong clambered to his feet happily. Ever since he had learnt that Fang Yuan was a realm energy practitioner, he had made up his mind to beg for this person's acceptance. After all, this was a path towards immortality! It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity!

When Meng Kuo entered the tent, he was surprised to see Hei Zhong sitting down and chewing on a leg of lamb.

"This..."

Meng Kuo's eyelids twitched as he looked towards Fang Yuan.

"Jie...you've already taken him in?"

"Mmhm. His name is Hei Zhong and he volunteered to serve me."

Fang Yuan nodded his head.

"Meng Kuo, what brings you here today?"

"To bring you to go see Senior Fang!"

Meng Kuo gave a grim smile.

"You've made a major contribution. Whether Senior Fang likes it or not, he will have to reward you. You'll definitely receive a noble title. In all likelihood, you will become a yeoman of the first class. After you return to the Shang capital with us to meet with the King, you might even get promoted to the rank of gentleman-bureaucrat of the third class."

Meng Kuo was well aware of the great respect the feudal states accorded to people who were well-versed in mysterious techniques.

Given Jie's abilities, he could attain at least the rank of gentleman-bureaucrat with no trouble. After all, he was the man who had captured Hei Zhong.

Meng Kuo felt a lump in his throat as he spoke and bowed slightly.

"I did not know that you, Jie, had remarkable skills. Do forgive

me for my ignorance."

Meng Kuo, like the other nobles, was now acutely aware of Fang Yuan's potential.

"No need for that...to be honest, I still don't have a good idea of how my divine technique works..."

Fang Yuan waved a hand. He seemed unwilling to talk about it.

Upon hearing this, Meng Kuo concluded that Fang Yuan was a lucky person who had acquired his skills through a chance encounter.

"Anyway...the promotion will have to wait until we return to the Shang capital and meet with the King. It will have to be registered!"

Meng Kuo spoke matter-of-factly and ordered some men to carry bronze, weapons and sundries into Fang Yuan's tent.

"These are the rewards for your meritorious service. You will be given twenty servants as well!"

The yeomen, gentlemen-bureaucrats and the gentlemen-ministers were part of the nobility. They could own lands, recruit aides and even build their own army! They were no different from the lesser lords and had to be treated with respect.

Even the lowest-ranked yeoman had to be registered with the royal court.

The nobles stood out from the commoners from birth and their descendants would all be given at least a yeoman rank. They enjoyed higher starting positions in both the civil and military services. Thus, the admission of a person into the nobility brought honour and glory to his family.

"The Shang capital? Yes, I would like to visit the place!"

Fang Yuan's eyes twinkled.

Putting aside talk of celestial dao, the god dao relied on people

dao to thrive. It would probably be incarnated in the lands surrounding the capital city.

"I will accept these gifts and meet Senior Fang later. Please help me decline all the other invitations!"

Fang Yuan waved a hand.

Meng Kuo did not have any objections. In the past, even a warrior who could fend off a hundred men would incur the wrath of the nobles if he acted like a snob. However, things were different now.

It was to be expected that a person with extraordinary talents would be restrained and arrogant.

Meng Kuo bowed once more and left the tent respectfully.

Fang Yuan regarded the scene calmly.

'Indeed...power speaks the loudest in every world...'

.....

On the second day, the Shang army set off for the Shang capital city.

Fang Yuan moved among the soldiers and quietly observed the passing landscape.

The blood of the witches in his body was growing stronger by the day and supplied him with a continuous stream of power.

"At this rate, I will be able to agglomerate the Ultimate Witch Body and regain much of my power by the time we reach the Shang capital..."

Fang Yuan could not help but smile as he thought about it.

The Shang men around him were all joyful as well.

"Sigh...I wonder if the corn in the Shang capital has ripened yet..."

Meng Kuo moved up to Fang Yuan's side. He was in a pensive

mood.

The Shang army was not made up of professional soldiers and the men were primarily farmers. If they did not make it back to the Shang capital in time for the harvest, it would lead to a famine the following year.

Meng Kuo's words reminded Fang Yuan of the small pieces of land he owned as well as the few field-tending servants that he had. This was all that Jie had left behind in the world.

'Other than tending to their own fields, farmers now have the added responsibility of working in the communal fields as part of the well-field system...this is similar to the manorialism practised in Europe...'

Fang Yuan was deep in thought for a moment.

Of course, it was fortunate that he was a citizen who had land of his own as well as some political power.

The peasants who lived beyond the city walls, and the slaves beneath them, were the ones who led hard lives.

"Thump! Thump!"

"Thump! Thump!"

The ground shook suddenly and violently.

A humongous black figure appeared from behind a mountain and trotted on.

"Ah...what a gigantic beast!"

Mayhem ensued among the troops. Meng Kuo and the other officers tried their best to maintain order and restrained soldiers who were acting rashly out of fear.

"Thump! Thump!"

An earthquake had been triggered. The black figure was approaching and Fang Yuan could see the purple patterns on its

black hide.

The beast had the head of an ox but had only one leg. Lightning and thunder broke out overhead as the beast advanced. It was like the god of thunder.

"The Kui Ox?"

Fang Yuan combed his memories and found a classic image.

"Master, don't make a sound!"

Hei Zhong was flustered.

"I've seen this beast before. It is gentle by nature and only attacks when provoked."

"Thump! Thump!"

Amidst the thunder and lightning, the Kui Ox glanced at the scattered army before moving away into the distance. Before long, the beast had disappeared beyond the horizon.

Meng Kuo and the other officers mopped the sweat off their brows and began to gather their men for a headcount.

After a few hours, the truth was out. A few hundred men had gone missing. Meng Kuo was alarmed but helpless.

'An appearance by the Kui Ox managed to inflict more losses than a defeat in battle. This is something!"

Fang Yuan shook his head.

The Shang era was a time where the supernatural coexisted with mankind. The borders that would one day keep supernormal forces away from the human world had not yet solidified. Not only could supernormal people impart knowledge to mortals like Hei Zhong, the beasts from mythology often appeared in the human world and could be hunted down by humans!

'Sounds like the early periods of human civilisations have similar myths...the legends from early Europe featured mortal men killing

giant beasts and ascending to godhood too...of course, reports of these legendary occurrences faded over time, both in the East and the West."

Fang Yuan had come to a conclusion.

"Perhaps...civilisations that have come into contact with the radiation will have to go through this process?"

"Move on!"

The Shang army started off again.

Fang Yuan summoned Hei Zhong and made him lay bare his white mist technique for Fang Yuan to study.

"Divine technique...this is a simple technique! It is not divine at all! Was it because he was not fortunate enough, or was he not talented enough?"

"I can learn quite a bit from this technique though. I can use it to derive other techniques..."

Fang Yuan glanced at Hei Zhong from the corner of his eye. He was an excellent guinea pig. This was exactly the reason Fang Yuan had taken him in as a slave.

Things tended to fall into place for Fang Yuan after all.

"However...the movement of such a large Kui Ox would displace other beasts from their dens!"

Fang Yuan examined Hei Zhong before turning to warn Meng Kuo.

"Be careful. As the Kui Ox makes waves along its path of travel, it might have triggered other beasts."

"Exactly...this is why we are trying so hard to leave this place quickly."

Meng Kuo gave a bitter laugh.

Just as he finished speaking, he heard the roar of a tiger coming

from behind him.

"What is happening?"

Meng Kuo calmed himself down and looked towards the rear of the army.

A white tiger had appeared and charged towards the soldiers. In a flash, it had snatched a slave over.

"I was spot on. Am I a jinx?"

Fang Yuan scrutinised the white tiger.

It had a body that was more than 20 feet long and had jaws that could swallow a man whole.

The white tiger moved like the wind and a white shimmering light protected its body. This was a monster who had gone through some degree of cultivation! It was here to feast on humans!

The white tiger seemed confident that the army would scatter and leave the old and weak behind for it to savage.

"How dare it! Surround the tiger and get your bows ready!"

Senior Fang issued his order. He was ready to overwhelm the tiger.

The appearance of the Kui Ox previously was a calamity and there was nothing that anyone could have done about it. However, this white tiger was far less threatening!

Chapter 556: White Foxes

"Arrows ready! Arrows ready!"

Dozens of archers drew their bows in the formation and loosed their arrows in unison.

"Swish! Swish!"

The arrows moved along a curved path in the air gracefully, much like the shape of Death's scythe, and flew towards the white tiger steadily.

"Roar! Roar!"

The white tiger gave a ferocious roar as it jumped several yards away.

The rain of arrows covered a large area. Even though there was much friendly fire, many of the arrows landed on the white tiger's body.

"Ding! Ding! Dang! Dang!"

Metallic rings reverberated through the air as the arrows impacted the white light surrounding the white tiger's body and fell to the ground.

Even so, the white light flickered and looked as if it was fading.

Beasts could prey on humans but humans could kill beasts too!

Numerous soldiers sprang forth as the army officers called for a charge.

"Roar! Roar!"

The white tiger was a murderous creature and pounced on a chariot which shattered under its weight. It swept its tail, harder than any whip in the world, and let it crash into a Shang soldier.

The ferociousness displayed by the white tiger stunned the Shang soldiers, who were previously fearless fighters.

The white tiger sensed their vulnerability and pounced on a foot soldier. With its prey firmly in its grasp, the white tiger began to feed.

The screams of the Shang soldier filled the air. Meng Kuo's eyes widened as he witnessed the ghastly sight.

"Demonic beast! I must kill you!"

In a flash, Meng Kuo was in command of a chariot and drove it towards the frontlines.

"It's just a little demon which might not even have achieved full spiritual awareness..."

Fang Yuan shook his head. A spiritually intelligent creature would have run away by now. On the contrary, this white tiger was becoming more aggressive even though the protective white light around its body was dimming. It obviously had a death wish.

"Watch my arrows!"

Meng Kuo roared as his arrows assailed the white light surrounding the tiger.

He had discharged three arrows from his bow in one shot.

"Ding!"

The first and second arrows broke upon contact with the white light. The third arrow, however, was the straw that broke the camel's back. The white light offered no resistance as the arrow popped the eye of the tiger.

Poof!

There was a burst of blood.

The white tiger roared in pain and ran towards Meng Kuo in a fit of madness. Its remaining eye was filled with a crazed rage.

"Hei Zhong...the white tiger is yours to handle!"

Fang Yuan waved the sword in his hand and gave an order to Hei

Zhong.

"Yes, master!"

Hei Zhong gave a battle cry and rushed over on foot with his trusty battleaxe.

He was just in time, for Meng Kuo had been knocked off his chariot by the white tiger and was about to get torn apart.

"Hey! Don't even think about hurting him, beast!"

Hei Zhong swung his axe up into the air and brought it down onto the tiger.

"Roar! Roar!"

The axe managed to cut into the front paws of the white tiger and blood was spilt. The tiger shrank away in pain and Hei Zhong took the opportunity to pull Meng Kuo to safety.

"Hmph!"

As Hei Zhong retreated, he exhaled a cloud of white mist. The white mist enveloped the white tiger and distracted it from Hei Zhong's ensuing attack.

Even though the large tiger was a demonic beast, it was at a loss as to what to do in the face of this seemingly divine technique.

"Loose the arrows!"

A severe voice rang out from behind and triggered a torrential hail of arrows.

A dark gleam joined the trajectory of the arrows and shot towards the white tiger. Whether it was by chance or not, Hei Zhong was in its path too!

"A flying sword!"

Hei Zhong turned around and was startled to see a smiling youth. It was the recovered Gentleman Jiu!

Gentleman Jiu had been humiliated by Hei Zhong and was saved

by good fortune. Now, he was ready to avenge his honour by killing Hei Zhong. He was prepared to disguise the murder as collateral damage sustained in killing the white tiger!

"Swish!"

Another dark gleam flew overhead.

This was another flying sword and it was actually able to knock Gentleman Jiu's flying sword to the ground despite having been launched later.

This other flying sword's path of flight remained unchanged and approached Gentleman Jiu at an alarming speed.

"How do you also know the flying sword technique?"

Gentleman Jiu was stunned. The person who had launched the other flying sword was more skilful than he was. He could only fall backwards in a clumsy attempt to escape it.

The sword sank into the ground less than a foot away from Gentleman Jiu. It would have killed him if he had not taken one more step backwards.

"It's that Jie!"

He shot an uncertain look over at Fang Yuan and felt a seething hatred.

'Hmph! He doesn't know what is good for him!'

Fang Yuan could not be bothered to say anything.

He knew that his move would cause Gentleman Jiu to hate him but he would never take it lying down if a subordinate of his was being attacked.

No matter what Hei Zhong had done previously, he was Fang Yuan's slave now. How could Fang Yuan let anyone kill him?

Fang Yuan was perfectly fine with Gentleman Jiu hating him.

If Gentleman Jiu wanted to cross Fang Yuan, Fang Yuan would

kill him without regard to his status.

Fang Yuan would kill even the Shang King if he made things difficult for Fang Yuan.

"Roar! Roar!"

The commotion with the flying swords happened in a flash and many of the soldiers were not aware of it.

Most of them kept their attention on the white tiger.

"Swish! Swish!"

The white tiger had lost the protection of the white light and was struggling with the arrow wounds on its body. One of its paws had been maimed and it was finally going away.

"Attack!"

Meng Kuo did not intend to let the beast escape. On his orders, a dozen Shang spearmen closed in on the tiger.

"Haha...I shall take your life!"

Hei Zhong let out a coarse laugh and brought his axe down onto the white tiger's neck!

"Poof!"

The tiger's head had been cut halfway off its neck. Blood spouted out of the large gash in streams.

"Roar! Roar!"

The gigantic tiger put up a terminal struggle where it broke a few spears and mauled a few soldiers to death. Finally, it collapsed to the ground and stopped moving.

Even in death, the tiger looked menacing.

Its ferocious aura was keeping the soldiers away from its body.

"Orders from Senior Fang: Our army has encountered a white tiger, which is a good omen. Skin it and present its fur to the

King!"

A soldier moved up to the front of the procession and read out Senior Fang's decree.

A military order was not to be defied. A few soldiers approached the tiger gingerly until they were sure that the tiger was truly dead.

At last, someone cheered, and the others echoed their jubilation.

Fang Yuan observed the proceedings with a glint in his eye.

That night, the army set up camp and tiger meat was distributed to the men. It was a happy affair.

Fang Yuan walked alone out of the camp with an iron sword hanging at his waist.

The golden gleam in Fang Yuan's eyes helped him to see the shimmering white marks on the ground that formed a path in the dark.

"Indeed, there are two of these little fellows!"

Fang Yuan retracted his spiritual aura, dimmed the light in his eyes and turned off his spiritual tracer. After walking on for a while, Fang Yuan arrived at a small valley.

He could hear small chattering sounds coming from ahead.

Fang Yuan quickly hid behind a tree and extended the tendrils of his spiritual sense.

Although Fang Yuan had not recovered the entirety of his cultivation, he possessed a high level of magical energy that allowed him to scan his surroundings thoroughly within a radius of a few yards.

The silent glow of the moon, the gentle mountain breeze and leaves whirling close to the ground all contributed to the beauty of the night.

In the clearing ahead, two white foxes were bowing to the moon.

The foxes had tiny bodies and large bushy tails. They did not have the stench of common animals and had a strange fragrance on their bodies. Their eyes darted about animatedly and their movements were intelligent. They were surely elves of the mountain.

'In terms of raw strength, even ten foxes would not be able to match the white tiger. However, not even a hundred white tigers will be able to match the foxes' intelligence...is this what it means by a trade-off?'

Fang Yuan watched the foxes silently.

They had been snooping around the camp and were now bowing to the moon. The moonlight that had fallen on their bodies looked especially dense. They were obviously in the middle of a cultivation ritual.

Moments later.

The two white foxes had completed their cultivation and began to play with each other. They chattered away without a care in the world while Fang Yuan watched on in the distance.

He could not understand the language of animals.

"Forget it, it's just two little demons!"

Fang Yuan took a big step forward.

"Hey!"

"Swoosh!"

The white foxes had not expected anyone to appear from behind the trees and were startled. They immediately sped off like two white arrows.

"Swish! Swish!"

Fang Yuan flicked two stones towards the foxes.

The white foxes were hit and fell to the ground, their eyes glassy.

"These little creatures have been bad!"

Fang Yuan hoisted both foxes up by the scruff of their necks. Their fur was extremely smooth to the touch, which aroused in Fang Yuan a passing impulse to make a fur coat out of them. However, upon closer inspection, the two foxes barely had enough fur between them to make a pair of gloves.

He released them and let them drop to the ground. Light returned to the foxes' eyes but they did not move and pretended to be dead.

"Enough of this...if you carry on with this act, I'll kill and skin you two!"

Fang Yuan intimidated them by baring his teeth.

"Nng! Nng!"

The two white foxes clasped their paws together and pleaded for mercy.

"Enough, take on your human forms!"

Fang Yuan pursed his lips.

The two foxes shared a look and decided to accept their fate. They hung their heads in resignation.

The foxes seemingly absorbed the essence of the moon and transformed into two white-robed servant girls.

They hugged each other and looked at Fang Yuan fearfully as if he was a predatory beast.

"Oh? Your cultivation has reached such a high level?"

Fang Yuan was surprised.

"This isn't the conventional path of the demon race. This is more similar to the celestial dao!"

"What...what do you want?"

The two fox girls were bright-eyed and had white teeth. They were around 13 or 14 years of age and were nearly identical to each other. One of them had gathered enough courage to speak up but looked like she was going to burst into tears at any moment.

"Nothing. I just wanted to know who was spying on the army camp!"

Fang Yuan rubbed his nose. He was feeling somewhat guilty about bullying these kids.

Nevertheless, Fang Yuan was thick-skinned and let the feeling pass.

"Tell me honestly, what are your intentions?"

"Boohoo...we only wanted to steal the fur of the White Mountain Lady...boohoo...we don't mean any harm!"

The two fox girls were terrified and Fang Yuan could not help but find it funny.

Chapter 557: Divine Technique

"The White Mountain Lady refers to the white tiger? Did you two know her?"

Fang Yuan asked the fox girls.

"Sister Bai was very nice...she helped us chase many bad people away!"

The younger girl said timidly.

"Bad people like me?"

Fang Yuan rubbed his face and joked, only to see that the two girls agreed with his statement. He could not help but feel slightly embarrassed.

"Heh...a classic example of the fox hiding behind the might of the tiger. Birds of a feather flock together."

Tigers eat meat, of course. The white tiger had treated the fox sisters well, but she was still a serial killer.

After all, in her eyes, the Shang army was but a large group of walking pieces of meat.

The white tiger had underestimated the Shang army though. She had attempted to prey on the Shang soldiers but ended up becoming their prey instead.

In Fang Yuan's opinion, this was natural selection. The laws of nature dictated that there was no right or wrong in the fight for survival.

Only the fittest could survive in the long term.

"Alright, tell me. How did you two learn these cultivation techniques?"

Fang Yuan glared at the two girls sternly.

The two foxes practised a cultivation technique that was entirely

different from the one practised by the white tiger. The white tiger followed the orthodox demon methods of honing the demonic body, refining demonic pills etcetera. These two foxes, however, were abandoning their physical forms in favour of honing their divine souls. This was more reminiscent of the celestial dao practised by humans.

"Grandfather Sang Qing taught it to us..."

The two fox girls were wary at first but fell under the spell of the golden gleam emanating from Fang Yuan's eyes. They ended up telling the whole truth.

"Sang Qing? An old fox? Where is he?"

Fang Yuan's interest had been piqued.

"We don't know!"

The two fox girls shook their heads.

"Grandfather Sang Qing was only passing by and imparted some skills to us by chance...he told us that we could go look for him at the Tu Mountain when we had achieved success in our cultivation."

"Tu Mountain?"

Fang Yuan nodded. He questioned them further and found out that the two foxes were timid by nature. They had not dared to venture into the world despite having achieved a high level of cultivation. Later, they made friends with the white tiger and became her sworn sisters.

The movements of the Kui Ox had displaced them from their old home and they had been forced to look for a new place to settle down in.

The white tiger practised the demon dao and ate people whenever she felt hungry. In the end, she had suffered retribution for her savagery. Although the two foxes had no intention of

avenging the white tiger's death, they wanted to retrieve her remains on account of their sisterhood and all that she had done for them. Little did they know that they would run into Fang Yuan.

"Another two unimportant characters. What a pity!"

Fang Yuan shook his head and giggled.

"It's just as well. The two of you aren't common foxes either...you shall join me from now on!"

Fang Yuan told the fox girls to revert to their animal form.

"Mm, the older sister will be called Big White and the younger sister will be called Little White! From today onwards, I will be your master! Obey me or you won't get anything to eat, is that clear?"

"Nng..."

The two foxes blinked as tears began to fall.

"Don't even think about running away. I've already done something to your divine souls and there is no way that you can escape!"

Fang Yuan gave the foxes a warning before carrying them back to his tent.

"Huh? Master, have you just gone on a night hunting trip?"

Hei Zhong was waiting alone in the tent and shook his head in dismay when he caught sight of the two foxes.

"These two little lumps meat won't even fill up our mouths!"

"These are my beloved pets. Take good care of them. I'll skin you alive if they get hurt in any way!"

Fang Yuan had to warn him.

After all, he was sure that Hei Zhong would barbeque the fox sisters if he was not told otherwise!

"Nng! Nng!"

The two foxes were terrified upon seeing the burly Hei Zhong and whimpered as the both of them curled up into a ball.

"Haha!"

Fang Yuan was greatly amused by the sight.

.....

In the company of his two pets, Fang Yuan began to conduct research on Hei Zhong's technique as well as the white foxes' cultivation technique. He put in all his efforts into studying the world systems of the realm energy practitioners. He would then make Hei Zhong test out his hypotheses. In this way, Fang Yuan made wonderful progress.

Time flew by quickly as Fang Yuan submerged himself in his research.

On this day, they had arrived in the lands surrounding the Shang capital.

"Is this it? The Shang capital?"

Fang Yuan stood on the elevated ground and scanned his surroundings with a fiery gaze.

His physique was more impressive than before and every movement of his had an indescribable majesty to it. There was an otherworldly quality to him now.

This was the work of the witch blood flowing through his veins. His Ultimate Witch Body was growing stronger.

Fang Yuan took a look at his stats board:

"Name: Fang Yuan

Essence: 50 (100)

Spirit: 50 (100)

Magic: 50 (100)

Profession: ???

Cultivation: ???

Technique: Ultimate Witch Body (90%)

Skill: [Medicine (Level 3)], [Botany (Level 6)(Peak)], [Fiery Golden Eyes (Level 1)], [Body Seal (Ultimate form)]"

"Even though I want all my special abilities to be on my stats board, this is not the time to restore the Pangu Eagle Body technique. I have to stick to the power systems of this world and level up by utilising the native energy. It will be slower this way but I won't encounter any bottlenecks before I reach the True Divine stage!"

"Also, because of the purity of the old witchcraft dao, the Fiery Golden Eyes divine technique has levelled up!"

Fang Yuan was looking at the runes of the Fiery Golden Eyes technique when a message surfaced:

"[Fiery Golden Eyes (Level 2)]: Divine Technique of the Witches, converted to this technique from the Dacheng Fiery Eyes (Level 5). Unlocks astrological and geomantic abilities. Able to identify changes in the six energies and to expose future perils! Currently Level 2!"

"Every world has its unique charm and culture. To suppress these would be to ruin something beautiful and might even lead to a backfire...since the Ancient Realm has already accepted me, I shall make use of its pathways...for the sake of smoothness and efficiency!"

Fang Yuan's face shone with happiness upon seeing that one of his skills had levelled up.

The Fiery Golden Eyes technique was not just any simple divine technique. It had evolved from the Level 5 Dacheng Fiery Eyes technique, making it practically a Level 7 technique! This exceeded even his skill in Botany, which had already peaked!

Fang Yuan had high hopes for his special abilities. After all, even the world could not suppress the imprint of his true aura!

Later, Fang Yuan noticed a magnificent city standing in the distance.

As the capital city of the Shang Dynasty, Shangyi had a breathtaking splendour that was unrivalled in the world.

The huge walls, the imposing armed guards, the fluid crowds and the farming slaves were all unique features of the Pre-Qin canvas.

Fang Yuan saw more than that.

"Is this...tribal energy?"

With his Fiery Golden Eyes, Fang Yuan could see plumes of black energy rising from the Shang capital. They stretched on for miles and were ever-changing, even vaguely forming the shape of a gigantic mysterious bird. Fang Yuan knew for sure that this was the tribal energy of the Shang! A skilled energy reader would be able to derive the foundations and destiny of the Shang by observing this sight!

Except that it was not possible for common energy readers to see something like that, or there might be divine retribution!

Nonetheless, Fang Yuan was able to see everything easily.

"To identify changes in the six energies and to expose future perils...not so far-fetched after all!"

Fang Yuan gave a small sigh. Suddenly, a look of uncertainty crept across his face.

The skies above the Shang capital were filled with dark tribal energy that became bright and colourful when they descended onto the city. This was supposed to be normal.

However, numerous purple energy rays were shooting upwards into the skies. One of the rays took the form of a blazing sword while another took the form of a shining scroll. They all moved

independently and looked like they were pitting themselves against the Shang tribal energy.

The last energy ray played it safe and concealed itself. Fang Yuan would not have noticed it if he did not have the Fiery Golden Eyes ability. Thus, he had become wary of this particular ray.

"The purple energy is vast and mighty. This indicates that a sage is present!"

Fang Yuan sighed internally.

"The purple energy ray isn't more than 6 miles in length, which means that the person it represents has not yet reached the level of a True Divine. Nevertheless, he is at least a 'Sir' among the Hundred Schools of Thought, or perhaps a 'Sage'?"

As Fang Yuan occupied himself with his thoughts, the army set up camp outside the city gates. Later, Senior Fang and the other officials were summoned into the palace by the Shang King.

Fang Yuan inhaled sharply and calmed himself down as he followed the unit into the city. They were now in the heart of the Shang Dynasty.

"I feel like...the crowd here is a little too small!"

Meng Kuo scanned their surroundings tentatively.

Nevertheless, he was a man of influence and went about asking questions. He returned cheerfully a short while later.

"Jie...today is a day of festivity. The Sword Sage Sir Cao has set up a school in Shangyi and is accepting students. Nearly half the city has gone over to check out his school!"

"Besides, I heard that the Legalists, Confucianists, Mohists and many other schools of thought have organised discussion forums to share their philosophies as well as to recruit disciples. We are lucky to have entered the city at this time!"

"The Hundred Schools of Thought?!"

There was a strange look on Fang Yuan's face.

"It's too early...alright, I knew this isn't the normal Pre-Qin era."

There was indeed a hazy impression on Jie's memories.

Many of these schools were influential and world-renowned. They had disciples all over the empire and were recruiting aggressively, making them forces to be reckoned with.

Fang Yuan was wary of their power and influence.

In the previous world, the Hundred Schools of Thought only surfaced during the chaotic Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods where royal authority had declined severely. The various feudal states were competing for hegemony and needed intellectuals to serve as their advisers on matters of government, war and diplomacy. Thus, they encouraged the free discussion of a broad range of thoughts and ideas and created conditions that were ripe for the rise of the Hundred Schools of Thought.

However, in this world, the Shang Dynasty reigned supreme. How could the King not worry about these powerful and unregulated organisations?

"Throughout history...powerful organisations would definitely incur the paranoia and suspicion of the hegemon...the fact that these schools of thought could survive this long and grow in strength means that there is something fishy going."

Fang Yuan laughed grimly.

"There must be another organisation backing these schools up. Or they might even have garnered the support of the feudal states. The reason for this is simple...they want to usurp the Shang!"

Chapter 558: Sword Sage

Transnational organisations like the Hundred Schools of Thought almost always appealed to self-interest.

They could even be seen as political organisations. This made Fang Yuan extremely worried.

"From the looks of the tribal energy...the Shang Dynasty is not stable...it is surrounded by over 800 feudal states, which greatly limits its potential for expansion. Less than thirty per cent of the world's land is under the direct control of the Shang King."

In Fang Yuan's opinion, the reality in this Shang Dynasty was more similar to the Warring States era.

"Jie...our King appreciates talented people and will definitely reward you handsomely. Shall we head over to Sir Cao's school of swordsmanship after we meet with the King?"

Meng Kuo had a kind smile on his face.

"No thanks...please tell Senior Fang that I am a happy-go-lucky person and couldn't care less for wealth and glory!"

Fang Yuan smiled back and waved goodbye.

"This is where we shall part!"

Fang Yuan was a carefree soul and had no wish to prostrate himself before the King. Besides, he was only going to be given the lowly rank of 'yeoman'.

It was only worth a second thought if he was going to be enfeoffed as a noble lord.

"Hei Zhong, let's go!"

Fang Yuan turned around to leave.

Hei Zhong hurried after him with the two white foxes.

"What?"

"How insolent! He dares to slight the King!"

"Treason! Treason!"

Meng Kuo was about to persuade Fang Yuan to reconsider when the other officials raged and tried to detain Fang Yuan.

When the officials approached Fang Yuan, a mist appeared and obscured their vision.

When the mist finally cleared, Fang Yuan and Hei Zhong were gone.

"Carefreeness over glory?" Meng Kuo stared into the distance quietly before he heaved a long sigh.

"What a strange man!"

Meng Kuo decided to give up all hope of bringing Fang Yuan out of the mountains.

"Master...where shall we go now?"

Fang Yuan walked along the streets jauntily while Hei Zhong called after him hesitantly.

Although Hei Zhong was a simple man, he was not a fool.

Fang Yuan's refusal to meet with the Shang King was a major affront. Someone was bound to complain and Hei Zhong expected them to get arrested any moment now.

Even if they managed to evade arrest, they would no longer be welcome in the Shang capital.

"Why worry about these things?"

Fang Yuan narrowed his eyes.

"How much progress have you made with the Great Yin Technique that I have imparted to you recently?"

The so-called Great Yin Technique was, in fact, the same technique used by the fox sisters to absorb moon essence. Fang Yuan had revised it slightly by adding in parts of the white mist

technique practised by Hei Zhong. There was no risk in cultivating this technique, albeit only in theory.

"Cough cough..."

Hei Zhong pulled a long face at the mention of this.

"That technique is so difficult to learn! I get the deep chills every time I practise it in front of the moon..."

"This is normal. You'll just have to get over it!"

Fang Yuan replied with a wide grin that Hei Zhong found unsettling.

Both of them walked on and arrived at a busy part of the city before long.

At the centre of the crowd was a school of swordsmanship. In front of the building was a raised platform on which two people were duelling with swords.

One of the swordsmen was a black-robed young fellow with his hair tied into a bun and he wielded his sword steadily. The other fighter was a big man of about thirty years old. Although his technique was unorthodox, he was very strong and quick on his feet, making his swordplay very lethal indeed!

"Uncle, what's going on over here?"

Hei Zhong approached a passing old man after Fang Yuan gestured for him to make enquiries about the event.

"The Sword Sage Sir Cao has opened a school of swordsmanship in Shangyi and is accepting new students. This is his youngest disciple, Can. Anyone who can defeat him will receive a hundred pieces of gold!"

The old man pointed to the pile of shining gold pieces lying in a corner of the stage. He grew more excited as he talked on.

"Since yesterday, Can has beaten 18 contenders in a row and is unmatched at the moment. The current challenger is Tiger, a

famous warrior in Shangyi. "

"Ding!"

At this point, a winner had emerged.

Can, who had been forced to the corner, thrust his sword forward with lightning speed. His sword looked as though as it was crackling with electricity.

"Poof!"

Tiger the warrior shouted out in pain as the sword cut into his arm. His grip turned bloody and he was forced to let his long sword fall to the ground.

"Thank you!"

Can inverted his sword and bowed to his opponent. He exuded all the suaveness of a gentleman.

"The youngest disciple of the Sword Sage Sir Cao?"

Fang Yuan yawned as he suddenly remembered the purple energy rays and the blazing sword that he had seen.

"Could one of the three purple energy rays be Cao Qiu?"

The full name of Sir Cao was Cao Qiu!

Fang Yuan smirked.

"Hei Zhong...go win a hundred pieces of gold for us. It will help to settle our expenses as we travel around the world. Remember to use a sword!"

"Yes, master!"

Fang Yuan had never told him anything about travelling the world. Nevertheless, he hid his surprise and leapt onto the stage with a sword on Fang Yuan's orders.

"Hei Zhong, a son of Dongyi, will take up your challenge!"

Hei Zhong looked so brutish that no one dared to object.

"After you!"

Can had regained his energy by taking a short break. He ascended the stage once more.

"Hmph!"

Hei Zhong exhaled. A cloud of white mist emanated from his nostrils and swept towards Can.

Hei Zhong was a boor but he paid attention to the details. He knew that he would lose if he had to compete with Can purely in swordplay. He had to think of another way!

Besides, he was brought up as a barbarian and was taught to achieve his goals through all means possible, unorthodox or not.

"Hmm? A strange technique?"

Can retreated immediately when he saw the white mist and held his sword in front of himself defensively.

Can had been momentarily stunned by the white mist. Hei Zhong took the opportunity to rush forward and took a swipe at Can with his sword. It was a massive effort.

"Snap!"

Can's sword snapped into two with a ring and he fell off the stage.

"Ah!"

There was a moment of silence among the spectators before mayhem ensued.

"A special technique! This is a man with special talents!"

"The swordsman Can has been defeated!"

"What a warrior!"

"A pity that his methods were..."

...

As the spectators dithered away, Hei Zhong walked towards the gold pieces and proceeded to pick them up.

He was thick-skinned and did not care about criticism. No one would remember who he was once they had left the Shang capital.

"Bah! You hurt him through the use of underhand tactics. How shameless!"

Another man leapt onto the stage. He was dressed in a similar manner to Can and had an angry look on his face.

"Do you dare to take me, Ang, on?"

"Hmph, wasn't it said before that I could leave with the gold pieces after defeating Can? Are you going to disregard the deal?"

Hei Zhong shouted out as he cast a sweeping glance at the spectators.

"The deal mentioned that only swordplay could be used!"

The swordsman Ang retorted.

"Did I not use a sword to duel?"

Hei Zhong rolled his eyes and argued some more.

"You!"

Ang's anger had turned his face into a dark shade of red and he looked like he was about to rush at Hei Zhong with his sword.

In the Shang era, people lived and died by the sword. People valued their dignity more than anything else and would defend it with their lives.

"Wait!"

A clear voice rang out.

"The warrior Hei Zhong makes sense. Ang, present the hundred pieces of gold to him before challenging him to a duel!"

"Yes, master!"

Ang cooled down immediately after hearing the voice and bowed to a man who had just walked out from the school building.

This middle-aged man was small in stature and wearing a hemp robe. He had large hands and piercing eyes. His intense gaze distinguished him from the common man.

"It's Sir Cao!"

"The Sword Sage!"

The crowd went nuts.

Fang Yuan chuckled silently. Hei Zhong had ruined their plans and Cao Qiu had to step out in order to salvage the pride of his school.

Fang Yuan's eyes gleamed. He would not miss this opportunity.

"Hmm, the energy rays I'd seen rushing up towards the skies corresponds to the energy he exudes. It's him alright! What is his motive in opening a school in Shangyi and recruiting students?"

As Fang Yuan pondered, Hei Zhong and Ang had begun to duel.

Ang's swordplay technique was more impressive than Can's and before long, he had forced Hei Zhong to the corner of the stage.

"Hmph!"

Hei Zhong unleashed his special technique again.

Ang was prepared for it. In one swift motion, he crouched down and rolled away from the white mist quickly.

"Poof!"

Little did he know that the white mist would flip around in the air like a snake and descend upon his face.

"Ah!"

Ang screamed before he fell down unconscious onto the stage.

"Ha...you are but a mortal man. How could you expect to resist

my divine technique?"

Hei Zhong laughed with glee as he savoured his victory.

His white mist used to be a simple technique that could be avoided easily. However, after practising the Great Yin Technique taught to him by Fang Yuan, he now had a high degree of control over his white mist and could steer it in any direction he wanted. His training had paid off.

"Ang has been defeated as well..."

The surrounding crowd continued to chatter while the other disciples of the Sword Sage observed the proceedings glumly.

However, most of them were about as skilful as Ang and knew that they were no match for Hei Zhong. They turned to look at their teacher.

In their opinions, only their seniors were powerful enough to deal with this Hei Zhong fellow. Be that as it may, their seniors were busy travelling the world and making a name for themselves. They had no other choice but to trouble their master to handle this matter personally.

"Whoosh!"

Cao Qiu picked an ancient-looking sword and ascended the stage.

"I, Cao Qiu, look forward to learning from you!"

Cao Qiu's disciples had been humiliated and it was up to him to salvage the reputation of his school.

"If I were to win again..."

Hei Zhong was in the midst of throwing out a boastful reply when his expression suddenly changed. He reversed his position.

"The Sword Sage's skill with the sword is legendary. I am far beneath your level and will admit defeat!"

Hei Zhong had no choice but to throw in the towel. His master

had spoken and he did not dare to disobey his master's orders.

Hei Zhong looked around and scratched his head. Was he the only one who had heard his master speak?

Chapter 559: Sword Duel

With the ancient sword in his grip, Cao Qiu turned to look at the crowd.

His eyes were like stars: blindingly bright. Those who met his gaze would inevitably tear up and look away.

"May I know who you are? How are you related to the warrior Hei Zhong?"

Cao Qiu had found Fang Yuan and stared at him with his eyes twinkling.

He had ascended to a level where he was one with the sword and was far more skilful than Gentleman Jiu, who was experienced in sword dao himself. Thus, Cao Qiu had a heightened spiritual sense and was able to pick up on Fang Yuan's silent transmission.

"Greetings, Sir Cao. I am Jie and Hei Zhong is my servant. We have made fools of ourselves in front of you!"

Fang Yuan replied smilingly.

The crowd got worked up upon hearing Fang Yuan's words. Even Cao Qiu's face turned slightly greenish.

A challenger that had defeated two of his disciples was a mere servant. The Cao school of swordsmanship had been severely disgraced.

Cao Qiu regarded this Shang man with much uncertainty.

Cao Qiu had prided himself on his high level of cultivation in sword dao. He had managed to defeat quite a number of people with special talents and no one had been able to offer resistance so far. In fact, he was sure that he would be able to handle Hei Zhong with no trouble at all.

However, there was this Jie! Jie had met his piercing gaze blandly, which was a testament to his high level of cultivation.

Jie's prowess was probably very much higher than that of his servant.

"If you are also a cultivator, would you mind teaching me a thing or two?"

Cao Qiu bowed deeply to Fang Yuan with a solemn look on his face.

Cao Qiu's disciples, including Ang and Can, were stunned. Their master rarely attended to outsiders personally. The fact that Cao Qiu was interested in this youth meant that he was special.

Besides, Cao Qiu's respectful treatment towards him was quite shocking. After all, Cao Qiu was a man who had curtly rejected the Shang King's offer to enfeoff him as a gentleman-bureaucrat of the first class!

"I am not exactly a swordsman..."

Fang Yuan shook his head.

"But you have a sword with you!"

Cao Qiu stared at the iron sword hanging at Fang Yuan's waist.

"How dare you!"

Hei Zhong roared in anger. A white mist flowed out of his nostrils as he exhaled and swept towards Cao Qiu.

Even though Fang Yuan had told him that he was no match for Cao Qiu, Hei Zhong felt that he had to teach Cao Qiu a lesson for being so pushy towards his master!

"Swoosh!"

His face unchanging, Cao Qiu thrust his ancient sword into the heart of the white mist.

"Poof!"

Something unimaginable had happened. The white mist had been split into two.

How could something that was formless and substanceless be cut into two?

Hei Zhong was shocked. He felt a sharp pain in his chest and spat out a mouthful of blood. This was the consequence of having his technique successfully countered by someone else.

"Clap! Clap!"

Fang Yuan watched on bright-eyed and applauded Cao Qiu.

"A sword move that can counter ten thousand techniques. Very impressive!"

Fang Yuan went up on stage and hit a few acupuncture points on Hei Zhong's body. Hei Zhong immediately regained some colour in his cheeks.

"I've told you before that your technique is merely a little trick. It won't work on a powerful opponent. Now you've learnt it the hard way, am I right?"

Fang Yuan admonished Hei Zhong, who was too embarrassed to speak. He turned to Cao Qiu when he was done.

Cao Qiu was a man with a strong will, comparable to the True Divines among martial artists! He was able to project his will onto the sword and has countered every single one of his opponents' techniques so far!

'A pity...that your foundations aren't strong enough!'

Fang Yuan's eyes gleamed. He had found Cao Qiu's weakness. Although Cao Qiu had a will as strong as the sword, his body was lacking in some characteristics. Hence, he was not a true sage!

"A sword move that can counter ten thousand techniques?"

There was a glint in Cao Qiu's eyes.

"No one has given a better description of my skill with the sword!"

"Forget it. It seems like you won't give me a break even if I refuse to duel you today!"

Fang Yuan grinned and pulled out the black iron sword from his waist.

Although the sword was only slightly longer than three feet, it was a rare blade.

"However...to avoid compromising our harmonious relationship, let's agree to duel in only three sword moves. What do you think?"

"Fine!"

Cao Qiu nodded and stepped forward.

"The first sword move!"

"Kaboom!"

A storm had been whipped up.

Cao Qiu's first sword move seemed to carry with it heavenly powers. It was the scourge of all sorts of demons and monsters.

The swordsman Can watched the duel with his mouth agape. He realised his cultivation of the storm sword technique was nowhere near his master's. If he had mastered this technique, he would not have fallen to Hei Zhong's deceptive trick.

In the face of the impending blow from the storm sword, Fang Yuan simply placed his sword in front of his chest.

"Dang!"

A clear sound rang out for miles.

The winds and thunder vanished. It was as if all that was left in the world was an immovable black mountain!

Unbudgeable even as the storms raged around it!

"Awesome swordplay...it is nearly at the level of sword dao!"

Although Fang Yuan had parried the blow, he praised Cao Qiu.

"A pity...nearly at the level of sword dao but not yet at the level sword dao after all..."

Cao Qiu stared at Fang Yuan dumbfoundedly. A hint of desolation lingered in his gaze. He suddenly spoke.

"Let the duel end here. I admit defeat!"

"What?"

The disciples of Cao Qiu had their mouths wide open. They had seen their god fall and their faith was collapsing.

Who was Cao Qiu?

He was the legendary and widely-travelled swordsman who had not yet met his match in the world! He was a man known as the Sword Sage with countless disciples. He was the idol of every swordsman.

Now, in Shangyi, had he really been defeated by an unknown youth?

"Impossible..."

Can gripped his own arm so tightly that he drew blood with his fingernails.

Ang and the other disciples had ashen-grey faces and trembled at where they were.

"Thank you..."

Fang Yuan exhaled and said nothing more before walking away.

"Master..."

Hei Zhong ran after him together with Big White and Little White.

The people of Shang cleared out a path for him respectfully. After all, although the two men had only exchanged one blow, the shockwave had rendered everyone near the stage unconscious with blood pouring out from their ears.

How could anyone not be awed by this level of martial arts?

There was no doubt that people all over the Shang Dynasty were going to sing of the swordsman Jie's victory over the Sword Sage Cao Qiu.

...

Nightfall.

In the moonlight, the silhouettes of two young ladies surfaced. They looked towards Fang Yuan deferentially.

Although Hei Zhong had been shocked the first time he had witnessed the transformation of the fox girls, he had gotten used to it.

"Big White and Little White, don't you two recognise me?"

Fang Yuan was amused by the awestruck look that the fox girls gave him.

"That person's sword moves...are very dangerous!"

Big White spoke after a long silence had passed.

"I know that if our Yin spirits came into contact with the sword, they would disintegrate...our Yin spirits had been suppressed in our bodies the whole day by the mere presence of that person!"

"You have good spiritual sense!"

Fan Yuan nodded.

"Sir Cao's swordplay can be described as 'a sword move that counters ten thousand techniques'. Your Yin spirits stand no chance against him."

"But such a person has been defeated by you!"

Big White's eyes had grown brighter.

"My sister and I would like to become your disciples and learn swordplay from you!"

"Swordplay is but a simple skill!"

Fang Yuan waved a hand dismissively.

"Do you know why Cao Qiu admitted defeat after exchanging only one blow with me?"

Upon hearing this, even Hei Zhong pricked up his ears.

"Although his sword skills are far superior to mine, he would surely die in a duel to the death against me! This was confirmed in the first blow that we exchanged and he had chosen to pull out of the duel so as to avoid further humiliation."

Fang Yuan explained blandly.

Even though Cao Qiu was an honoured figure among the Hundred Schools of Thought, Fang Yuan had read him thoroughly. Cao Qiu was but a Wu Zong in the Meridian Opening Realm. Nevertheless, his cultivation in sword dao and mind power was at the level of a True Divine!

Cao Qiu's foundation was unstable while Fang Yuan's was too powerful.

Even though his Ultimate Witch Body had not grown to its full potential, Fang Yuan was more than capable of killing Cao Qiu with brute force!

"Of course...Cao Qiu is only the sword dao representative of the Hundred Schools of Thought. It does not say anything about the highest level of martial arts in this world..."

Fang Yuan was acutely aware that even though the Shang Dynasty had not fallen yet, these were tumultuous times!

The brightest people from the various feudal states often interacted and exchanged ideas with each other. New talents were constantly emerging and impressing people with their achievements. Fang Yuan's recent victory over Cao Qiu was destined to become another mere footnote in history.

"The Ancient One is a wily fellow. He has definitely worked out a plan and would be stirring up the world somewhere in hiding...the troublesome thing is that these chaotic times would make it much harder for us to notice anything out of the ordinary..."

500 years of Shang rule had passed and it was time for a new power to take over their mandate. Thus, as the world experienced major upheavals, strange occurrences would be seen as only part of the process.

It was like how Fang Yuan had not managed to notice any traces left behind by the Ancient One.

At this point, Fang Yuan suddenly frowned and looked towards the door.

"Who is spying on us?"

Fang Yuan was now residing in one of the inns constructed by the Shang for the envoys from the feudal states as well as travelling scholars. These state-run inns were built along the major routes and within major cities. It was as they said: "Within 3 miles of every wild road lies a cottage with food and drink", "there are halls in the city that are dedicated to receiving officials from the imperial court".

Security was very tight in a state-run building and for someone to make it so far into the inn was not easy. This person was definitely skilled.

In actual fact, Fang Yuan had thought about going back to Jie's house to take a look but changed his mind upon realising that it might inconvenience Meng Kuo.

Hei Zhong let out an enraged roar and he pounced towards the disturbance.

"Ding!"

A large youth wearing a hemp shirt and straw shoes was forced to appear before them. He carried a weathered bronze sword that

looked like it was on the verge of breaking.

The most striking feature about the youth was his fiery gaze.

"Greetings, Sir! My name is Nie! I hope that you will take me in as your disciple!"

"Your name is Nie?"

Fang Yuan's impatient look had turned into one of curiosity.

"Don't you have a surname?"

The youth lowered his eyes a little.

"I hail from the rural areas and never had a surname!"

"You can adopt the Ge surname if you intend to make a name for yourself one day. Your name shall be Ge Nie from now on!"

The bright-eyed youth fell to his knees in gratitude immediately.

"Thank you for granting me this name, master. From today onwards, my name shall be Ge Nie!"

Chapter 560: Young Master

"Master?"

Fang Yuan froze for a moment. He scrutinised the youth and smiled.

"Good...very well, I shall take you in as my disciple. A word of warning though. You shall place your life in my hands with no regrets!"

"I won't have any regrets as long as I get to learn swordplay from you!"

Ge Nie shouted out his answer.

"Alright!"

Fang Yuan flicked his fingers. He was more than happy to have found another guinea pig and passed down an order to Hei Zhong.

"Hei Zhong, help this person settle down and impart to him the first chapter of the Great Yin Technique!"

"Yes, master!"

Hei Zhong bowed to Fang Yuan and looked at Ge Nie with sympathy. At the same time, he felt a sense of kinship towards age Nie. After all, there was another person sharing his plight.

"Thank you, master!"

Ge Nie was elated at having been accepted as a disciple by Fang Yuan and kowtowed profusely. This hardy youth obviously had no idea of what Fang Yuan was capable of.

"Alright, that's one irritating insect settled!"

Fang Yuan flicked a stone towards the wall.

"Bang!"

Under the astonished gaze of Ge Nie, the part of the wall that got hit suddenly moved. A large piece of cloth dropped to the ground

to reveal a human figure.

"Like him, I'm here to seek an audience with you, yet you treat me differently!"

The new arrival was a man in his thirties with a flowing beard and a pair of dreamy purple eyes. He had a strange and mysterious air about him.

"It is because he came in peace while you...are up to no good!"

Fang Yuan had picked up his sword.

The bearded man was startled upon seeing that and turned his palms outwards hurriedly.

"Wait...we are on the same side! I'm only here to send you an invitation on behalf of my master!"

"Who is your master?"

Fang Yuan was prepared to draw his sword.

'You'll find out when you get there!'

The bearded man gave Fang Yuan a secretive smile and vanished into the ground.

"The Five Elements Escape Technique? Could he be from the School of Naturalists?"

Hei Zhong's pupils constricted upon witnessing the bearded man's exit.

"Hmm..."

Fang Yuan smiled coldly.

This was a technique that could be countered even by the Sword Sage Cao Qiu in one sword move. Fang Yuan waved a hand and a bamboo slip fell into his hand.

"Juxian House?"

Fang Yuan looked at the date and venue written on the slip.

"Looks like it is a place set up by one of the feudal states in Shangyi for the purpose of attracting talent...it is self-explanatory indeed. I shall head over there to find out more!"

Supernormal forces existed in this world and there were 800 feudal states in the Shang Dynasty, which was too much for the Shang King to handle effectively. Thus, the flow of talent remained largely unregulated.

This had led to the emergence of the phenomenon known as the Contention of the Hundred Schools of Thought. The various feudal states placed premiums on capable people with special talents and treated them respectfully.

The more powerful feudal states even constructed buildings known as talent houses that received and housed talents from all over the world.

"I wonder which feudal lord is backing this school..."

Fang Yuan tightened his grip on the bamboo slip and crushed it before letting the powder sift through his fingers.

...

The next day.

Fang Yuan left Hei Zhong to watch over Ge Nie and the fox girls as he headed over to the talent house with an iron sword in hand.

The talent house stood on a large plot of land in the city. Although the city was bustling, the immediate vicinity of the building was peaceful. There was the occasional passerby but they never ever went near the talent house.

A few armed guards stood by the gates to the talent house. They were big-sized, muscular, bright-eyed and had callused hands. They radiated a ferocious aura from their bodies and were forces of nature.

Upon noticing that Fang Yuan's approach, the guards hardened

their gazes and blocked his path with their swords.

"Who goes there?"

"Hmm?"

Fang Yuan frowned.

"This is a talent house and I see myself as a talent. Am I to be denied entry?"

The right thing to do was for Fang Yuan to produce the bamboo slip invitation that he had received the day before. However, Fang Yuan had found something to be rather strange.

No one in their right mind would place a whole gang of intimidating guards in front of a talent house.

Besides, these armed men looked like they could take on multiple fighters each. Their abilities were wasted on guard duty. If men like them were assigned to every talent house, it would be terribly inefficient!

'So...is there someone important living in the talent house right now?'

Fang Yuan did some silent guesswork.

"It's you, Mister Jie. My apologies..."

At that moment, the man with the flowing beard walked out of the talent house and bowed to Fang Yuan.

"My name is Mo Ge and I have been waiting for you on the orders of my Young Master! After you, Mister Jie..."

He then went on to admonish the guards.

"Are you all blind? How can you not recognise Mister Jie, the man who defeated the Sword Sage? Apologise to him now!"

"It's Master Jie!"

The stern expressions of the guards turned into looks of awe and astonishment.

They were swordsmen themselves. How could they not have heard about the sensational events of the previous day?

"What is the name of your Young Master?"

Fang Yuan could not be bothered to take the guards to task and asked his question as he entered the compound.

In the Shang Dynasty, the honorific of 'Young Master' was reserved for the sons of feudal lords. This was indeed a man of importance.

"Our Young Master is a man with a distinguished pedigree. He is the son of the Marquis of Western Zhou... Young Master Wu!"

Mo Ge announced loudly.

"Marquis of Western Zhou? Young Master Wu!"

Fang Yuan nodded but complained silently.

'You might as well be called the Marquis of Xibo, [Ji Chang...](#)'

From his conjecture, this world had been influenced by a more advanced civilisation. The general trend of development remained unchanged but it was only to be expected that many of the details were different.

After all, any slight change experienced by these parallel worlds could potentially lead to a butterfly effect. Not to mention that the dream masters were actively messing with world affairs. It would be strange if everything remained the same.

After Fang Yuan had entered the building and walked down two corridors, a young man dressed in a brocade robe appeared and greeted him.

"So this is Mister Jie, the man who has defeated Sir Cao? Greetings, my name is Wu!"

"You are too kind, Young Master Wu!"

Fang Yuan returned his greeting and sized up the Young Master

of Western Zhou.

He looked to be younger than 20 and had good-looking facial features. His movements radiated elegance and regality and there was a rarefied air about him.

Even if he had not been born with a silver spoon in his mouth, he would be more than capable of making a name for himself. His status as the young son of a feudal lord only served to increase his potential.

"Haha...I love to be around heroes. Please dispense on ceremony. After you, Mister Jie!"

Young Master Wu led Fang Yuan into a banquet hall and sat him down on the seat opposite his own. After the servant girls had brought food and wine to the tables, Young Master Wu offered Fang Yuan a toast.

"Cheers!!"

The nobles really did know how to enjoy themselves. They were entertained by music and dance as they feasted and Mo Ge, who was sitting beside Fang Yuan, remained chatty throughout the meal. Everyone was enjoying themselves.

The banquet had gone on halfway when Young Master Wu asked a casual question.

"From what I know, you are from Shangyi? You have also accomplished some startling feats in the recent battle against Dongyi?"

"That's right...I have no intention of becoming an official though. I'd prefer to live a carefree life."

Fang Yuan waved his hands as he spoke. He knew that Young Master Wu was trying to find out more about his background. He suddenly gained a newfound respect for the intelligence gatherers of Western Zhou.

Although he did give them his name, the spies had obviously done their homework overnight and had probably profiled him comprehensively.

"Aiya..."

Young Master Wu looked disappointed.

"What a pity. Your talents would have been greatly appreciated in Western Zhou and you would have enjoyed prestige and wealth...even if you are not interested, do you happen to have anyone to recommend to my service? They will be highly valued!"

Young Master Wu almost looked hungry in his pursuit of talent. However, what he truly wanted was to find out about the origin of Fang Yuan's skills.

"I'll have to apologise..."

Fang Yuan smiled.

"My swordplay was imparted to me by the heavens, but I did accept a new disciple last night..."

Mo Ge coughed upon hearing this while Young Master Wu's smile stiffened.

They were aware that Ge Nie had been newly accepted and had not yet learnt anything from Fang Yuan. It would be stupid to employ him gainfully.

Nevertheless, Fang Yuan had not intended to let Ge Nie go and continued.

"A pity that he is still rather amateurish. He isn't ready to serve you, Young Master!"

"No worries. Bring him to me whenever you feel that the time is ripe. I will be eternally grateful to you!"

Young Master Wu was laughing when a servant girl rushed in and whispered words into his ear. A change came over his face.

"What happened?"

Fang Yuan raised the wine vessel to his lips. The show was about to begin.

"Sigh...Mister Jie, you may be highly-skilled, but you have been backstabbed!"

Young Master Wu let out a sigh.

"I've received news that Gentleman Jiu has been slandering you before the Shang King, saying that you have been talking dismissively about the King. The King was enraged and has ordered your arrest!"

"Oh?"

Fang Yuan nodded.

Gentleman Jiu might have the motivation to do such a thing but it would never escalate to such an extent.

Young Master Wu was definitely exaggerating. Nevertheless, Fang Yuan was willing to play on.

"What should I do? All the lands under heaven belong to the King!"

"Haha..."

Mo Ge broke out into laughter upon hearing Fang Yuan's words.

"Do forgive me, Mister Jie...You have lived in Shangyi your whole life. You might not have known that beyond the Shang lands are 800 feudal states."

"The Marquis of Western Zhou is actively searching for talented men like you. He is also well-versed in the art of divination and can aid you in getting out of this situation..."

What he meant was that there were not many people in the world who could help Fang Yuan after he had angered the Shang King.

There was no better time than now to seek refuge in Western Zhou!

"Let me...let me think about it..."

Fang Yuan put on a troubled expression and got up to leave after making some excuses. ...

Young Master Wu pulled a long face as he stared at Fang Yuan's retreating figure.

"This person doesn't know what's good for him!"

Mo Ge looked at his master's unhappy countenance and voiced out his own thoughts indignantly.

He considered himself to be very proficient in his divine technique and yet he had never been regarded this highly by his master!

Fang Yuan deserved death for taking this preferential treatment for granted!

Founder of the Zhou Dynasty

Chapter 561: Arrestment

"Jie is a Shang citizen and if he falls in with them, it will be detrimental to my cause!"

Young Master Wu had calmed down and he spoke coldly.

"Ge Mo, I want you to bribe the personal guards of the King. Tell them to turn the arrest warrant into a death warrant. Turn the King and Jie against each other."

"It shall be done, Young Master!"

There was a glint in Mo Ge's eyes as he retreated.

Mo Ge could not help but laugh inwardly.

"Jie...so what if you are a gifted swordsman? You have offended our Young Master and will suffer a terrible death. Your death will contribute to Western Zhou's grand ambitions!"

As long as the Shang King fell for the calumny about Jie and fell out with him, Western Zhou would benefit no matter who won.

'This is how our Young Master conducts his affairs!'

Mo Ge walked out of the hall and wiped the sweat off his brows.

Young Master Wu was bright and ambitious, not to mention that he also had a vicious streak. Mo Ge was finding it increasingly difficult to serve him.

Nevertheless, working under such a lord was the way to survive in these chaotic times and to accomplish the enterprise of overthrowing the Shang Dynasty!

"Young Master Wu will become our future King! No one will stand in his path...much less a lowly swordsman..."

Mo Ge muttered to himself.

"Sir Zou!"

Young Master Wu stood alone in the great hall with his arms

placed behind his back. He suddenly posed a question to the air.

"Having met this person, what are your thoughts?"

"There are so many kinds of people in the world and I can never be sure about someone. One thing is for sure though. He is definitely not a simple man!"

A white-haired old man emerged from behind the walls. He wore a large robe and had a long beard that touched the ground. He looked very sprightly for his age and wore a foot-long hat on his head. He was definitely a man with special talents.

"A man who can defeat Sir Cao is obviously not a simple man!"

Young Master Wu waved a hand dismissively.

"What else?"

"Also...this person has achieved a high level of cultivation. He is not a common swordsman, nor is he a realm energy practitioner. On the contrary, he looks like he is from the witch race..."

The old man stroked his white beard.

"Witch?"

Young Master Wu looked perplexed.

"Have you heard about the Jiuli Disturbance? The people of Jiuli were witches...the God of War, Chi, that they worshipped was also a witch..."

Sir Zou let out a sigh.

"Unfortunately, the world underwent a major upheaval 500 years ago and the witch race disappeared off the face of the earth. It is wholly unexpected that we were able to meet a member of the witch race today...besides, seeing how he had glanced directly at my hiding spot, he must have discovered my spying on him."

"Really?"

Young Master Wu did not know what to feel about that.

...

"There was probably a fourth person present in the talent house!"

As Fang Yuan left Juxian Hall, he turned his head around and caught sight of a touch of purple energy. He could not help but smile.

When he had first arrived in Shangyi, he had felt the presences of three difficult people. The Sword Sage Sir Cao was one of them. The second person was right here.

"I'm guessing that the third person is in the imperial palace. After all, a legacy of 500 years would probably result in a formidable Shang royal..."

Fang Yuan was walking back to his lodgings when he suddenly frowned.

A group of Shang soldiers had surrounded the building. They were obviously targetting Hei Zhong, Ge Nie and company!

"They've made their move in so short a time?"

Fang Yuan grumbled but he did not back down.

"Jie...as a Shang citizen, you have committed treason by disrespecting the King. Surrender now!"

An army commander stepped forward and railed at Fang Yuan. It was Gentleman Jiu. At his side were Meng Kuo and the other soldiers who had partaken in the operation against Dongyi.

It was clear that Young Master Wu's camp had gotten to them first.

Of course, it was probably thanks to Meng Kuo and a few others that the soldiers had not yet rushed into the building to make their arrests.

"Jie...sigh..."

Meng Kuo stepped forward and bowed.

"Do have a care for the general situation and follow me back to the palace to meet with the King. I will run the risk of getting punished and defend you...besides, now that you have the reputation of emerging victorious over Sir Cao, the King won't make things difficult for you."

Meng Kuo was unwilling to see Fang Yuan resist arrest for it was a path of no return.

However, someone did not share his sentiments.

"Men, make them put down their weapons and take them down!"

Gentleman Jiu pointed at Fang Yuan and unsheathed his sword.

Dozens of soldiers rushed forward menacingly with their spears.

'Resist!'

Gentleman Jiu stared at Fang Yuan morbidly. To him, if Jie did not resist arrest, he would teach him a lesson that he would never forget. He would then kill Hei Zhong in revenge for having suffered humiliation at his hands.

If Jie resisted, he would be a dead man!

In the Shang capital, resisting the civil force was a capital crime. Even it was Sir Cao and all his disciples, the state would see to their deaths.

"Really...you have no idea what you're in for!"

Fang Yuan flicked his sword and a metallic sound rang through the air.

"Buzz!"

As the sound rang out, Fang Yuan smashed his way through the surrounding Shang soldiers like a tornado, leaving them lying about like broken ragdolls.

"Shield!"

Gentleman Jie let out a roar and a dozen shield-bearing soldiers

spread out in front of him. Another dozen bowmen emerged from behind the shield bearers.

"Shields on!"

The shield bearers slammed their shields on the ground firmly, forming an impenetrable iron wall.

An iron wall with arrows at the ready. In war, any later and this formation would have been surrounded.

Gentleman Jiu was confident that if Sir Cao had been here, he would have ended up like a porcupine with arrows sticking out from his body! Jie was more formidable but there had to be a limit to what he was capable of.

"Ignorant!"

However, in the next moment, he had seen the look in Fang Yuan's eyes. It was a look of condescension and pity.

"I have travelled nearly a thousand miles worth of battlefields and have mowed down thousands with my sword!"

Fang Yuan bellowed out extendedly and appeared before the shield formation with his sword in hand.

"Kaboom!"

In the next moment, a storm raged!

Fang Yuan had managed to channel the power of the winds and thunder into his sword thrust.

The seemingly impregnable shield formation was ripped apart, revealing the frightened bowmen who were standing behind.

"Loose the arrows! Loose the arrows!"

Gentleman Jiu gripped tightly onto his sword but it brought no comfort to him.

"Swish!"

The arrows rained upon Fang Yuan with metallic clangs before

they fell harmlessly to the ground.

"Since you all want to die, I will fulfil your death wishes!"

Fang Yuan strolled up to the bowmen leisurely and slashed his sword about, leaving all of the bowmen incapacitated.

Fang Yuan then walked over to Gentleman Jiu, his sword dripping with blood.

"No..."

As Gentleman Jiu looked on despairingly, Fang Yuan slapped aside Gentleman Jiu's sword with his own sword and plunged it into his throat.

"Poof!"

A red mist exploded from Gentleman Jiu's wound as he collapsed lifelessly onto the ground.

Meng Kuo was horrified. By massacring Gentleman Jiu and his men, he had definitely made an enemy of the Shang regime.

The King had not only lost an important aide but he had also gained a powerful enemy!

'Sigh...it's all Gentleman Jiu's fault. The slanderous remarks made by the traitorous court officials are also to blame. The King himself is too much...'

Meng Kuo tried to suppress what he considered to be treasonous thoughts and eyed Fang Yuan with a newfound hatred.

Meng Kuo was sworn to the Shang King and since Fang Yuan had decided to fall out with the imperial court, he would take Fang Yuan down at all costs and stem the rise of this perceived evil.

Fang Yuan was aware of what Meng Kuo was feeling at that moment.

"What a pity...that this loyal official isn't allegiant to me."

Fang Yuan sighed.

A man like Meng Kuo would have made a wonderful right-hand man. However, he could also become a most troublesome enemy.

However, he was only human.

'If he dares to make any more trouble for me, I'll kill him!'

Fang Yuan had made his decision and exhaled deeply.

"Whoosh!"

The winds howled and whipped up the sands and stones. The skies darkened as a hurricane began to form on the spot.

The Shang soldiers ran amok and screamed in panic.

When the crazy occurrences finally died down and normality was resumed, Fang Yuan, Hei Zhong and company were long gone...

...

The news arrived at the imperial palace an hour later.

"Gentleman Jiu has passed away in an attempt to arrest to Jie?"

The Shang King was named Xin. He was a large man and looked every inch a king. Back when he had been younger, he could lift cauldrons heavier than 1000 pounds and was known for his immense strength.

Not only did he have a Herculean build, but he was also well versed in the art of war. He had scored military victories over the tribes of Dongyi, Jiumiao and more. Under his rule, the Shang empire had reached its greatest territorial extent. He was one of the brightest rulers in the history of the Shang Dynasty.

However, in his middle age, he had become more inclined towards merrymaking and had developed a mercurial temper.

When he heard that Fang Yuan had resisted arrest, King Xin flipped over the table in front of him in a fit of rage.

"How dare he act like this in Shangyi. Does this capital city still belong to me?"

The two servants at his side shared a quiet laugh with each other.

They had taken bribes from Western Zhou and was prepared to slander Jie in front of the King, which would sabotage chances of reconciliation even if Jie had been willing to meet with the King peacefully.

What they had not expected was that Jie was a maniac. They did not even have to sow discord.

"Pass down my orders to lock up all the gates of the city and issue a national arrest warrant for him!"

King Xin bellowed on.

"When I get my hands on Jie, I will make sure that he experiences excruciating torture!"

The wrath of the Shang King had left all the servants in the imperial court trembling.

No one had noticed a figure glide away from the outside of the imperial palace to a princely palace. He then went on to relate what he had seen to a young man.

"Jie?"

This young man had piercing eyes and gave off an exalted aura. He had a more impressive countenance than Young Master Wu.

After all, how could the upbringing of the Young Master of a feudal state compare to that of an imperial Prince?

The appearance and fortune of people in the world were expressions of their strength and potential. These things did not happen by chance.

"It is a great pity that we have fallen out with a master that has inflicted defeat upon the Sword Sage!"

The young man drew his sword determinedly.

"I will leave the palace and personally arrest Jie for Father's

sake...Mm, this is what you will tell the King if he asks, is that clear?"

"Yes, my Prince!"

His aides bowed deeply in reply. At that moment, they all shared a sense of helplessness.

Chapter 562: The Creator

Just as the entire Shangyi was in a state of confusion after Fang Yuan's actions, none of them would expect him to stroll casually in the capital instead of fleeing for his life.

"Is this the Creator's Temple?"

Fang Yuan looked up towards the towering architecture. It was built around the mountainous terrain and had an ancient look to it. There was a solemn vibe coming from the temple.

There was religion in the Shang Dynasty. However, there were only two main religions: The Tai God from the Heavens and the Creator from the Earth!

Rumour had it that the Tai God was the one who created the realm, while the Creator was the god of the people.

'According to religion, the Tai God represents the Heavenly Will! It represents the rules of the realm! The dao! It does not take any form. However, it is useless if any humans were to worship it...'

The Heavenly Will would be able to affect the large scale of things, but it helping individuals was unheard of. It was too high up and seemed almost irrelevant to most.

However, it was different for The Creator.

"If I were to do this, a God might just appear out of nowhere..."

Fang Yuan stepped into the temple and arrived at the main hall. A statue greeted him.

The statue of the female god had lifelike expressions and was a dainty looking god. It seemed compassionate, but the surprising thing was the fact that it had the body of a snake!

"Has it finally become a god..."

Fang Yuan's eyes glittered as he immediately felt a connection between the statue. He felt connected to it in another realm.

The actual body of The Creator was not in the Shang Capital. Rather, it was in another half plane.

After all, this god was the guardian of mankind and not just the god of the Shang Empire. Obviously, she would not be here.

"Religion creates higher beings... This is interesting..."

Fang Yuan immersed himself in the atmosphere and was lost in his thoughts.

The Tai God represented the Heavenly Will and was an enormous entity. It could not reincarnate into humans even if humans were to worship it.

Furthermore, it would not be able to detect anything even if humans were to worship it. If an entire capital were to worship it, there might just be a slight chance for the Tai God to sense it.

However, this was different for The Creator. It was more suited to humans and was widely worshipped everywhere. It also did not have the burden of the entire realm as it had the ability to take up human forms, becoming a true divine being!

"It is harder to become a deity than to follow the god dao... It has already been 500 years, but realm energy practitioners would only undergo a few breakthroughs during this period of time. However, religions could be easily strengthened in such a short period of time... Could Army Leader Chi have reincarnated into another form as well?"

Gazing at the half-human half-snake statue of The Creator, Fang Yuan could almost feel as though he was in contact with the purest and most powerful form of energy of the Ancient Realm.

"Master!"

Ge Nie's uneasy voice was heard. "There's a commotion outside. I'm afraid that the soldiers are here once again!"

"Mmm..."

Fang Yuan casually dismissed him and continued to gaze at the statue. Indeed, he could feel the lifelike emotions from it. It was as though the entire statue was carved from the purest white jade.

'Could they have carved it in such a way on purpose? King Shang might just compose a new poem after looking at this statue. Could this be the interplanar force? Could this be a side-effect of radiation from that source realm?'

He felt lost as he thought deeper about it.

Suddenly, a random thought came to his mind. 'What if... I am the one composing the poem? What would happen then?'

"Rumble!"

Outside, the peaceful sky suddenly turned dark and streaks of lightning crackled across the sky.

"Kill!"

A swarm of Shang soldiers rushed in and started to mindlessly slice everything they saw, dying the floor of the temple blood-red.

'Forget it... I have returned to this realm in an attempt to chase after The Ancient One. There is absolutely no need for me to go against the will of the realm...'

Fang Yuan casually sliced his sword in the air and the oncoming soldiers fell to the ground in a pile of bloodied mess. He started to shake his head as he observed the whizzing arrows and the casualties around. There was even a with lying among the pool of blood. 'This is uncalled for... The Creator is a compassionate god. Now that blood has stained her temple and her followers are killed, the Shang soldiers have put themselves against her... Is this an act of defiance against the heavens?'

Fang Yuan held his sword and made an escape path for himself. Suddenly, he picked up a green bronze sword and flung it outwards. One of the leading soldiers was struck and fell to the ground.

"Gentleman is dead!"

The soldiers were disorganised and Fang Yuan and company managed to escape from the mess.

"Stop it!"

At this point in time, a group of people rode horses and arrived at the temple. The one leading the group was a promising young man had his face was flushed with anger. "This is The Creator's Temple. How dare all of you disrespect it?"

He was filled with extreme anger as he directed his horse toward Fang Yuan.

"I am Prince Pan! Jie, you better surrender!"

Pan roared as he made his way towards Fang Yuan. Unfortunately, his horse stumbled and he fell to the ground. Effortlessly, Fang Yuan picked him up and placed his sword on Pan's neck.

'Mister Jie, quickly make your escape. Take me as your hostage and you can order for the city gates to be opened!'

Pan whispered softly in Fang Yuan's ears.

"Interesting!"

Fang Yuan smiled and shouted towards the soldiers. "If you want your prince to live, get out of my way!"

"Prince Pan?"

Once the Shang soldiers realised that Prince Pan was being held hostage, they looked at each other in despair and retreated to form a path for Fang Yuan and company to arrive at the city gates with no obstruction.

The guards at the gate did not dare to disrespect Prince Pan and Fang Yuan as well and promptly, albeit unwillingly, open the gates for them. They even provided them with a carriage for Fang Yuan and company.

...

In the grasslands.

As soon as Fang Yuan and company took over the carriage, they quickly fled from the city and not long after, they were miles away from Shangyi before taking a break at a nearby river.

"Prince Pan, why did you rescue me?"

Fang Yuan ordered Ge Nie and Hei Zhong to feed the horse before sitting down. He looked at Prince Pan with interest.

'The purple energy rays filled the sky above, and there are no signs of a weakened empire. It's a pity that the fate of the people is interconnected with the fate of the empire... If the empire were to fall, the people will fall with it too.'

"You are a talented person and I am unwilling to see you oppose the Shang Empire!"

Prince Pan paid his greetings. "However, by the time I've heard the news about you, it was already too late. I can only help you leave Shangyi first. When I return, I will then try to convince my father to change his mind towards you."

"Prince Pan, you are a worthy and virtuous son!"

Fang Yuan smiled. "However, your father is arrogant and full of himself. He will have to go through this ordeal one way or another!"

On first sight, Fang Yuan felt a sense of familiarity towards this prince. It was as though he was someone familiar.

The vibe he was giving off was similar to those who belonged to the division which Fang Yuan had single-handedly created previously, which made him a little fond of this prince.

"Ordeal?"

The prince's expression changed and he bowed once more. "Please enlighten me!"

"It's difficult! Difficult, difficult, I say! It had already begun and there is nothing we can do about it!"

Fang Yuan shook his head.

He had only just thought about it.

Since this realm had already been infected with the radiation of energy from a higher realm, it would have to undergo a certain calamity. Something had to happen. It could very well not be the lustful poem which King Shang would compose. For instance, it could also be... the killings which happened earlier today!

"It had begun?"

Prince Pan shook and was in disbelief.

"The Creator was a god of compassion. You led a group of soldiers to kill people in her temple, tainting it with blood. Your soldiers have also killed her followers. What do you think about this?"

Fang Yuan spoke calmly.

"Is it about The Creator? I shall return now and order people to sacrifice livestock in an attempt to apologise!"

Prince Pan gritted his teeth.

"It's too late!"

Fang Yuan shook his head. It was as though he had completely seen through Prince Pan.

Suddenly, he burst out in laughter. "Forget it... Since we are fated to meet today, there must be an underlying reason to it... I will give you this incense. If you encounter any trouble in the future, you can light it and I shall arrive personally to help you!"

Fang Yuan could not interfere with the country affairs for no reason.

Therefore, he made use of this opportunity by disguising it as a repayment to Prince Pan for his kindness. As such, everything

would be logical.

'This is great... If everything happens as how I have predicted it, the great war in Shangyi will still happen, and it will affect all 3 regions! The Ancient One will not miss this opportunity!'

Fang Yuan thought to himself silently.

As soon as The Ancient One were to show up, he would undoubtedly be met with lightning tribulation!

...

This was a void.

Incense filled the void and turned into golden streaks of religious force. Like a huge river, the streaks of religious force swirled around. It was a spectacular sight.

In the middle of the void stood a temple. The path at the entrance of the temple was paved with gold and resembled a golden dragon. Thick streaks of religious force gathered above the temple, making the temple look even more majestic than it already was.

In the middle of the main hall of the temple, on an altar, a seemingly sleeping god was awakened.

The top half of her body was human, and the bottom half was that of a snake. Her face was elegant and compassionate. "My temple has been intruded... My followers are killed!"

Before her, a streak of green fog rose up, forming a screen which showed the events that happened on that fateful day.

As she watched on, her expression started to turn into a strict one. "What audacity! How dare the Shang people think so highly of themselves! They deserve retribution!"

As she became enraged, the heavens and earth responded.

The entire plane rumbled and revealed the mountains of the Da Qian world.

Suddenly, it turned into the 800 feudal states and the Shang Empire in the centre, with black fog circling the top of the Shang Empire. At the Northwestern side, a streak of red light appeared.

"Is this... the heavenly will?!"

The Creator scoffed. "With just a simple thought, I have managed to create all these troubles..."

She was only intending to give the Shang Empire a small warning and was ready to forgive them as soon as they repent.

However, now, the heavenly will made use of her in an attempt to eradicate the Shang Empire!

How much power was involved in this, and how many people would die because of this?

"This is regretful... Although I am a god with godly powers, I do not have much control over his..."

She sighed as though she was looking at the doomsday of the realm.

Although she was god herself, she was still bounded by the laws of the realm. With a single thought, her actions would go out of control and it was too late!

Instead of blaming her for creating the calamity, it was more accurate to say that the heavens had made use of her to do so.

"Is the heavenly will active now?"

After a long while, as everything settled down, a piece of information appeared before her and The Creator remained silent.

Chapter 563: Recreating the Dao

"The Creator is half-human and half-snake... In reality, this means that she belongs to - the demons!"

Fang Yuan rode on his horse and started to think about the statue he saw in the temple. A wide grin appeared on his face. "This also means... In this generation, The Creator is not only the god of the humans but the leader of all demons!"

The influence of such a god would be too scary to imagine.

In fact, she could possibly be the strongest being in this realm!

"The Shang Empire is destined to fall, but its 500-year foundation is still nevertheless strong. Unless The Creator personally interferes, it is almost impossible to destroy the empire in such a short time..."

"This is the heavenly will!"

Fang Yuan was too clear about the limitations of the gods.

Since gods gain their powers from their followers, they had to conform to the rules of the realm. They would still be under the control of the heavens.

As soon as the heavens decide on the fate of the Shang Empire, The Creator would not hold back. Instead, she would be the one causing it, as seen from how the heavens could make use of her.

"Unless she becomes an ancient god, she would never stand a chance in opposing the heavens... Therefore, she will likely be the one to cause the downfall of the Shang Empire."

Thinking about Prince Pan who had just left, Fang Yuan sighed.

The prince's demeanour, humility and wisdom made him the perfect candidate to be king. If he were to be successful in taking the throne, the Shang Empire might stand a chance to survive.

Unfortunately for him, the heavens were strict!

"If I had persuaded him just now and decided to help him to become king, I'm afraid I will put myself at a risk. This is the heavenly will, his fate, and the trend of this realm..."

Fang Yuan sighed.

"Master, where are we going now?"

Hei Zhong rode a tall horse and the foxes curled up on his shoulders, making him seem as though he was wearing a silver scarf. Ge Nie was struggling to maintain his balance on his own horse as he gripped the horse's fur tightly, afraid that he would fall.

"The western countries, naturally!"

Fang Yuan had planned to journey towards the Northwest all along. "The strong powers are at Shang and the West. Of course, we'll have to go there to take a look!"

As a dream traverser, he had a huge advantage for having knowledge of all worlds he had visited before.

Even a sage such as The Ancient One could only vaguely sense the changes in the realm and predict the downfall of the Shang Empire. However, he could not possibly have any idea as to what would cause it.

However, Fang Yuan was different!

With the memories of Jie and the understanding of this realm, Fang Yuan could easily deduce the cause of everything.

"It's a pity... I don't have enough power! If I have a vast intelligence network, I will be able to transmit information quickly to find the likes of Jiang Ziya and Shen Gongbao..."

"Also... This realm does not seem to discriminate against dream elemental force. I can attempt to try out the new dream master technique and restore my cultivation..."

Fang Yuan whipped his horse and rode towards the horizon as his

mind raced.

After a day, the sun finally set and the moon rose over the horizon.

Hei Zhong and Ge Nie pitched a tent near a river, caught a few sparrows and rabbits and prepared dinner for the 5 of them.

The two foxes hugged their drumstick and ate it to the bones. After dinner, they faced the moon, released their Yin spirits and started to cultivate the essence of the moon.

"The two of them are more hardworking than you!"

Heng Zhong lashed out at Ge Nie. "Nie, Master has told me that if your progress is not satisfactory, he will kick you out!"

"Yes senior!"

Ge Nie crossed his leg and sat on a rock. He started to absorb the essence of the moon and shivered coldly. A layer of frost settled on his hair.

However, he was a hardworking person. Even as his teeth chattered and his lips bled, he managed to attain the skill of absorption and entered a trance, his mind at peace.

"Master... look! I've been strict on him and he has finally made it!"

Hei Zhong reported to Fang Yuan, hoping to gain some credit for it.

"You even dare to tell me about it? He is just a newcomer but his progress is almost catching up to yours..." Fang Yuan glared at him. "If he overtakes you, you will get it from me..."

"Master, don't worry!"

Hei Zhong shuddered in fear and quickly located an empty plot of land to begin his cultivation.

To him, the pain of cultivation was nothing compared to the

torture which Fang Yuan could possibly give him.

With this threat, he obediently followed Fang Yuan's instructions.

"Hmmm... The which I have created is considered complete!"

Looking at Hei Zhong and Ge Nie in their states of cultivation, Fang Yuan silently observed the flow of Yin Energy in their meridians and nodded his head.

This technique was indeed created for demons. After his adaptation, Fang Yuan managed to make it suitable for humans. Of course, it was still not perfect yet, but good enough.

Even for such a basic technique, Hei Zhong had to try many times before being able to use it to its full potential.

"Now, my will allow me to cultivate to a level equivalent to a 9th Tier spiritual knight... That's the most it can do unless I am able to refer to the books the realm energy practitioners from this realm!"

To speak the truth, in Shangyi, Fang Yuan had gathered information regarding realm energy practitioners.

Unfortunately, these group of people were too mysterious. Furthermore, 500 years was too long for the average human but was merely a few generations for these realm energy practitioners. Therefore, the different cultivation levels of these realm energy practitioners were not well documented by humans. The most humans were able to gather were levels like the 3 Peak Flowers, the 5 Elemental Energy etcetera.

After all, reality was not a game. Records of these realm levels differ from each other. For instance, the most factual Yin Spirit could be casually explained in many different ways.

Fang Yuan could not be bothered to care about these minor details and named it as how he would usually refer to it as.

'In this realm, there are many branches of people skilled in many

different ways. The majority of powerful beings are as powerful as 9th Tier spiritual knights and 9th Meridian Wu Zongs. There might be one or two Grandmasters who are able to peer into the realm of the sages! The demons would surely know about this. That is why in the god dao, there is a powerful being, The Creator. The Creator is already more powerful than True Divines and True Elementals...'

Fang Yuan had a good grasp of the martial arts in The Ancient Realm.

"Based on my current cultivation level, I can do whatever I want... If I can restore my cultivation level to the point before the war at the Jade capital, I would almost be the most powerful being in the realm."

Fang Yuan crossed his legs and appeared dazed as he connected with his actualised dream world.

His actualised dream world was rebuilt from the purest dream elemental force from the Demonic Heart Realm. Although it was merely a sea of purple, it was already as strong as a 3rd or 4th Tier Illusionary Divine stage dream master.

"The dream dao was initially dependant on a weak foundation as it absorbs dream elemental force. Now, my foundation is strengthened, but..."

After witnessing the source of original energy, Fang Yuan was no longer interested in the normal dream elemental force.

Unfortunately, at his current cultivation level, it was impossible for him to absorb and harness original energy.

Long periods of cultivation could only compress the original dream elemental force in his actualised dream world, resulting in a thick and viscous silver liquid which seemed as though it was on the brink of solidifying.

"Can I name this physical state as dream elemental crystal?"

Fang Yuan gazed at his own actualised dream world. It was a world made up of dream elemental crystals.

"It's a pity... Such thick and concentrated dream elemental force is still nothing compared to original energy!"

A single drop of original energy would be enough to create an entire realm!

Even the purest form of dream elemental crystal would not be able to do it. These two entities were on completely different levels!

'Original energy seems like a concept, an everlasting one that is able to continuously radiate lower forms of energy... I can never fully understand this as a dream master!'

Since he knew that he would not be able to fully understand it, Fang Yuan did not dare to remove the restriction he had on his Body Seal.

Otherwise, if the source energy were to explode, his true physical form and even his true soul would be disintegrated.

"The current plan is to continue on the purified dream dao before even attempting to harness original energy... However, even after that, original energy will still remain as a mystery..."

Fang Yuan was still unaware of the characteristics and traits of the purified dream dao simply by looking at its foundations.

He was equally clueless as to when he would be qualified enough to harness original energy.

However, he would never go wrong if he were to continue on his current cultivation.

With a single thought, numerous dream elemental crystals gathered together within his actualised dream world, forming the shape of a divine sword!

It was the Leaving Fire Sword!

As soon as the sword appeared, the actualised dream world shook and an illusionary shadow of a sword descended from above. The entire sword quickly formed and was a brilliant red.

"The imprint of the 8 Gates Sword Array is still in here. This makes it extremely simple to restore my cultivation..."

Fang Yuan heaved a sigh of relief as he sensed the familiarity of the Leaving Fire Sword. It was as though the sword had become more divine through the previous ordeal, and this even gave Fang Yuan some inspiration about the path after the 8 swords were completed.

"It's a pity that I am no longer interested in this secret technique. Be it a dream soldier master, dream spells master or dream array master, the different professions only differ in how they make use of dream elemental force. Why should there be a distinction? The forming of these swords is a mere representation of my cultivation..."

Until now, Fang Yuan had already understood how the professions of dream masters did not matter.

Although he might be a dream soldier master on the surface, beneath him, he could still create countless spells with a single thought, or create arrays with a single thought.

"The dream dao consists of only one path... creation! Now, I shall change the name of the 8 Gates Sword Array. It is a physical entity created by my knowledge on sword arrays. I shall rename it as 'Creation Sword Array!'"

Fang Yuan's eyes glistened.

With a single thought, his stats window started to change:

"Name: Fang Yuan

Essence: 50 (100)

Spirit: 50 (100)

Magic: 50 (100)

Profession: Dream Master

Cultivation: Illusionary Divine Stage (1st Tier)

Technique: Ultimate Witch Body (90%), [Creation Sword Array (1st Sword (100%))]

Skill: [Medicine (Level 3)], [Botany (Level 6)(Peak)], [Fiery Golden Eyes (Level 1)], [Body Seal (Ultimate form)]"

Chapter 564: Royal Mandate

The state of Western Zhou.

This was one of the 800 feudal states and sat in the northwest of Shangyi. The lands of Western Zhou were vast and shared borders with the lands of Xiyi and Quanrong.

Generations of Western Zhou Marquises had been ambitious and worked on expanding their lands towards the West. They encouraged population growth and built up the state's military forces. The combined efforts of these Marquises had turned Western Zhou into the most powerful Shang feudal state.

The current Marquis of Western Zhou was said to be a sage descended from the heavens. According to a legend, his birth was marked by the appearance of colourful clouds that took the forms of tortoise shells and yarrow stalks, sacred items that were used in divination.

The previous Marquis of Western Zhou was said to have been afraid of censure by the Shang and threw his newborn into the river. A large number of golden carps had surrounded the wooden basin that the infant had been placed in, in the formation of a golden lotus.

Upon witnessing this miraculous sight, the old Marquis changed his mind. He named his son Li and saw to it that he was well brought up.

When Li grew up, his genius became apparent. He had the gift of fortune-telling and was extremely accurate in his predictions. He conducted deep research into ancient texts and devised a new art of divination known as the Yi Dao. This had led to the creation of the School of Yi and Li was henceforth known as Sir Yi!

Fang Yuan was impressed with these achievements and had even thought that Li was a son of destiny, a person destined to lead the

way out of the chaos.

"Master...once we make it past the mountain ahead of us, we will arrive in Western Zhou!"

Hei Zhong shouted from atop his horse.

"I've scouted the road ahead and found that not only have the roads been paved, but the inns are also larger than those found in Shang. It seems like this is a place where the people live and work in peace!"

"Hehe..."

Fang Yuan chuckled coldly upon hearing Hei Zhong's words.

Western Zhou was a mere feudal state with a land area smaller than that of Shang. How did it manage to spur on development to such an extent?

Also, by enjoying a high standard of living in Western Zhou and attributing it to the Marquis's greatness, where would that leave King Shang?

To a unified empire like the Shang Dynasty, the supersedence of regional loyalties over national loyalties was a portent of calamity.

"I've heard that the Western Zhou state has moved against the Quanrong and Xiyi states several times in recent years...once powerful, these two barbarian states have fallen into crises after Western Zhou had taken a great deal of food, metal, women from them. Meanwhile, the people of Western Zhou lived in comfort. The Marquis even devised policies such as the criminalisation of infanticide, compulsory marriage at 15 years of age as well as the material incentivisation of childbirths...."

It was Ge Nie who had a good knowledge regarding the affairs of Western Zhou.

"Even within Shangyi, there are people who actively spread the word about the virtuousness and accomplishments of the

Marquis!"

War usually began with the spreading of words.

This was a lesson from later history that the people of this era had not yet grasped.

"The Sage Sir Yi?"

As Fang Yuan passed through the border of Western Zhou, his eyes flashed with a new light.

"Alright, let me take a look at what you have achieved!"

...

The capital city of Western Zhou.

Colourful clouds converged high up in the heavens. [The goddess Nuwa](#) stood among the clouds and looked down at the bustling city.

"The heavenly mandate...is with Zhou! There are two obstacles that stand in the way of its ascension!"

Nuwa looked towards the western lands of Western Zhou and saw a violent battle taking place.

"The Quanrong and Xiyi states are the largest threats to Western Zhou's development. They will have to be destroyed in order for Western Zhou to move on!"

Nuwa pondered for a moment before waving her fair hand and sending some colourful clouds over to bless the Western Zhou troops.

After she was done, she shifted her gaze to the southeast.

'The military strength of Western Zhou is barely half that of Shang. In order to fulfil Zhou's destiny of overthrowing the Shang, the Dongyi and Jiumiao states will have to occupy the majority of the Shang army such that the imperial capital will be left undefended. In this way, Western Zhou would have a valuable

opportunity!'

Having made sense of the heavenly mandate, Nuwa disappeared into the clouds.

A rock bathed in colourful lights fell out of the skies and descended upon Western Zhou.

In the royal palace.

The Marquis Li of Western Zhou had the look of a gentle old man and was occupied with his tortoise shells and hexagrams at that moment.

He lifted the charred tortoise shells excitedly.

"The frontlines have managed to break the Quanrong army? In such a short time?"

Adrenaline rushed through his veins as he stood up and left the palace.

"Kaboom!"

The skies shook as a strange occurrence took place. With a blinding flash, an object surrounded by colourful lights fell to the earth.

Soldiers standing all around had their mouths agape as they witnessed the sight. The servants fell to their knees in a fearful reverence.

"Isn't that the direction of...Qi Mountain?!"

The Marquis of Western Zhou stared in the direction of which the rock was heading and passed down an order.

"Get the horse carriages ready...we are going to Qi Mountain now!"

...

"Master..."

Fang Yuan and company had witnessed the fall of the colourful

object as well.

"Could it be that Western Zhou is favoured by the heavens?"

Ge Nie may be knowledgeable but he was still a product of the ancient era. The occurrence of this strange event had dazed him.

Fang Yuan gave him a hard whack with the hilt of his sword.

"What are you waiting for? Go check it out!"

Fang Yuan had arrived at a silent conclusion.

'My senses can't be wrong. It must have been Nuwa's doing. It seems like she has been working hard to propel the rise of the Marquis...'

'Also...I'm sure that such a sensational event would have caught the attention of the Ancient One!'

A phenomenon of such a scale would definitely lead to repercussions all over the world!

Not only would people around the world see it as an omen, but there would also be a large impact on the Cultivation World. Scholars and sages, hidden cultivators and higher beings, monsters and demons, as well as other authorities, would have noticed Western Zhou as a result. The Western Zhou state would no longer be able to remain out of sight.

There was no escaping the wheels of history.

"After it!"

The three men immediately spurred their horses on and sped towards the landing point of the colourful rock.

"That is the direction of...Qi Mountain?"

"You are too slow. Find somewhere to wait for me at!"

Fang Yuan aimed straight at the direction in which the colourful rock had fallen and stepped into the void. Flames erupted around his body as he flew towards the rock like a comet.

The agglomerated Leaving Fire Sword was not only more stable than before but it also carried with it several special abilities.

It was rather similar to the Sword Flying Technique but of a more basic form.

"Kaboom!"

The colourful rock smashed onto the ground and a deafening sound reverberated in the air.

Fang Yuan had reached there just in time.

When he arrived at Qi Mountain, he saw that the people living around the mountain had prostrated themselves in the direction of the mountain. Additionally, soldiers had encircled the mountain.

A large crater had appeared in the side of the mountain. Colourful lights emanated from it and illuminated the surrounding air.

"A treasure!"

"A treasure from the heavens for the chosen ones!"

"Take it! There is hope for the Great Dao now!"

Dark energies were converging upon the mountain, carrying with it the figures of monsters and demon. The Western Zhou army, as well as Western Zhou's more remarkable citizens, kept them from coming closer.

"Hmm?"

Fang Yuan rose up higher into the air where he got a clearer view.

"It is fortunate that the first arrivals were only made up of petty cultivators or Western Zhou would be in big trouble...this treasure though...is it a Penta-coloured Rock?"

The incredible view allowed him to view the crater in its entirety. Lying right in the middle of it was a crystalline rock that

shone in five colours.

A well-dressed old man approached the crater gingerly.

"The Marquis of Western Zhou?! Was this treasure meant for him? Something fishy is going on..."

Fang Yuan was so used to seeing things like this that he could no longer be bothered to complain.

Of course, a Penta-coloured rock was not enough to pique his interest. Fang Yuan found a good hiding spot among the dark clouds and peeled out contentedly.

"Great...I wonder which unlucky unorthodox cultivator will be the one to trigger the explosion!"

The Marquis looked dazed as he stretched out his right hand towards the Penta-coloured rock. He was only a few inches away.

"Roar! Roar!"

A bone-chilling roar split the air. It was coming from the foot of the mountain.

"Whoosh!"

A strong gale swept across the ground and blocked out the skies.

A large shadow was moving at an incredible speed along with the dark wind. It let out another roar and revealed itself: a huge black bear!

This bear had stretch marks on its face and wings on its back. It was of a strange and wild species found in the ancient era. The bear moved at the speed of lightning and smashed through the human wall in its quest to ascend the mountain.

"Roar! Roar!"

Upon seeing the Penta-coloured rock, the bear's eyes became bloodshot. It used its paws to slap the soldiers who attempted to confront it into the ground. Following which, the bear tried to

pounce on the Marquis.

'It will be interesting if the Marquis really dies, but...'

Fan Yuan shook his head lazily. He knew that the Marquis would not die before fulfilling his destiny.

"Chirp! Chirp!"

Indeed, help had arrived.

A clear shriek filled the skies. The figure that emerged flapped its mighty purple wings, which sent the bear rolling until a phoenix claw pressed into its body and halted its tumble.

"This is the...Purple Phoenix! Is it heaven's will that a phoenix is flying around Qi Mountain?"

Even the Marquis, who was well acquainted with the supernatural, had become agitated upon seeing the majestic bird.

The Phoenix before him had purplish-black feathers and had very long tail feathers that were of five colours: black, white, red, yellow and green. Bright tassels hung from them and enhanced the grandness of the bird.

The Marquis had immediately recognised the bird upon first sight. It was definitely a phoenix!

The classics told of five types of Phoenix. The most common species was red in colour but there were the yellow, green, purple and white species as well.

In the presence of the Purple Phoenix, the Marquis no longer hesitated and touched the Penta-coloured rock.

"Whoosh!"

Light burst forth from the pentagon-coloured rock and flowed over the Marquis's body, eventually solidifying into a colourful armour and a sword!

The Marquis now radiated a mysterious power and the

surrounding soldiers fell to their knees in reverence.

"The heavenly mandate!"

The Marquis of Western Zhou raised his sword, accompanied by the fearsome shriek of the Phoenix. The unorthodox presences promptly retreated.

At the moment, a soldier rushed to the Marquis's side and offered the latest news on his knees.

"Greetings my lord, I have urgent news from the front lines. We have achieved a great victory over the Quanrong and Xiyi armies. The Quanrong King has perished in battle while the Xiyi royals have agreed to become our vassals!"

The combination of these events silenced even the most fervent doubters.

Was the royal mandate really with Western Zhou?

Henceforth, The Creator shall be referred to by its name, Nuwa.

Chapter 565: Confirmation

"Impressive methods! Impressive calculations! The sword and armour, together with the publicity, will serve as solid proof of the royal mandate!"

Fang Yuan watched on silently. He had no intention of making a move.

The person who had orchestrated the whole thing must still be watching behind the scenes. Would they choose to appear now?

"This Five Elements Purple Phoenix, however..."

Fang Yuan examined the beast. His eyes gleamed.

"Not only is it a divine beast with magical talents, but it has also mastered the five elements. Its power is only superseded by that of the True Divine. Perhaps we can call it a Secondary Divine. Could it be [Kong Xuan](#)?"

Of course, although the peacocks were descended from the phoenixes, they were distinct from each other. Fang Yuan could tell them apart easily.

"The Five Elements Phoenix is a rare species. Not sure if it is a representative of a higher being, or is it here of its own accord in support of the Marquis ..."

Fang Yuan's stared at the Five Elements Purple Phoenix and frowned.

For some reason, the Phoenix invoked in him a sense of familiarity.

It looked like someone he was pursuing!

"The Ancient One?! It may or may not be..."

This person had abandoned his original body and had undergone reincarnation. It was only to be expected that his divine soul had changed. Besides, he was once a Sage and would have no lack of

concealment methods.

In truth, Fang Yuan did not recognise him on first sight.

Even upon closer inspection, Fang Yuan had not managed to find any proof that the Phoenix was the Ancient One. It was only his spiritual sense that was doing the talking.

'Could it be that the Ancient One has become a Phoenix through reincarnation?'

Fang Yuan was stumped for a moment.

Under normal circumstances, Fang Yuan would have killed the Phoenix regardless of whether it was the Ancient One in disguise or not. It was better to be wrong than to have the Ancient One slip through his fingers again.

However, there was a problem.

The Five Elements Purple Phoenix had the power of a Secondary Divine. Fang Yuan's Ultimate Witch Body was not fully developed and he would not be able to overwhelm the Phoenix yet.

It would become much harder to get to the Phoenix when Nuwa arrived!

Fang Yuan did not want to put himself at more risk than he had to.

"I'll continue to wait and see!"

Fang Yuan kept his eyes trained on the Five Elements Purple Phoenix.

At the same time, the Marquis seemed to have come to a decision and announced it loudly.

"From today onwards, Western Zhou will adopt the Phoenix as a national symbol! The era name shall be changed to Auspicious Phoenix in commemoration of this event!"

"Yes, my lord!"

All the soldiers and peasants present broke out into loud cheers.

Fang Yuan could see that puffs of tribal energy were gathering to form a dense mass.

The energy of destiny surrounding the Marquis had stabilised completely and was rushing up into the sky like a pillar to the heavens.

Another purplish-black Phoenix had appeared within the pillar. It bore a great resemblance to the Five Element Purple Phoenix.

"Chirp! Chirp!"

The Five Element Purple Phoenix let out a shriek and flew into the pillar of energy where it became one with the other Phoenix.

"Has...has this Phoenix become the divine protector of the state?"

Fang Yuan's eyelid twitched.

The Five Elements Purple Phoenix had intertwined itself with the fate of Western Zhou.

This way, the Phoenix would perish if Western Zhou fell. On the other hand, the Phoenix would prosper if Western Zhou managed to overthrow the Shang Dynasty.

This was a life-and-death gamble for the Phoenix and even Nuwa did not interfere.

'These methods...are pretty familiar...'

Fang Yuan let out a sigh.

At the very moment where the Five Elements Purple Phoenix had fused with the energy of destiny, a small bit of its true aura had escaped into the air and subsequently, into Fang Yuan's grasp.

Fang Yuan had been unsure previously. Now, he was dead sure that the Five Elements Purple Phoenix was the Ancient One!

"Chirp! Chirp!"

The Purple Phoenix let out an extended shriek. Colourful lights

shone from its body as it displayed its majesty.

Fang Yuan turned around to leave without hesitation.

The Purple Phoenix had secured a breakthrough for itself when it chose to fuse its own fate with the tribal energy of Western Zhou. It was as powerful as a True Divine now!

Besides, as long as Western Zhou remained strong, the Phoenix would thrive as well. It would even be able to come back to life in the event of its destruction!

"What a pity...I was too late!"

Fang Yuan sighed inwardly and quickly retreated.

...

"Master?!"

Hei Zhong and Ge Nie were just about to rest when they saw Fang Yuan appear in the burst of fire. They greeted him heartily.

"Are we heading to Western Zhou's capital city now?"

"We're leaving now!"

Fang Yuan waved a hand gloomily.

There was nothing more he could do in Western Zhou.

'The Five Elements Purple Phoenix, now the sacred beast of Western Zhou, is the Ancient One! He has regained his level of cultivation as a True Divine spiritual knight and is being backed up by Western Zhou's tribal energy. Dealing with him will be very difficult...'

'However, the Ancient One is very ambitious. He wants to take this chance to regain his Sage status as well as to attain Dao using the five elements. He even covets Nuwa's power. There must be an opportunity here somewhere for me to make my move!'

Fang Yuan sat down with his legs crossed. The more he thought about it, the more he felt that the times were not favourable to

him.

'I had wanted to give Western Zhou my blessings, but now...'

'What I can do is now is to rush back to Shang and help them to defeat Western Zhou. This is the only way to kill the Ancient One!'

'It's a pity that I had never thought about this beforehand and only have a mild relationship with the Shang...it feels like I have been tricked by the Ancient World...'

Fang Yuan sighed. He had understood what was going on.

Although the Ancient World had accepted him, he and the Ancient One were receiving equal treatment.

He would have chosen to fall in with the Shang if he had arrived during Shang's golden age.

However, at present, the tribal energy of the Shang was unstable. Things would inevitably go against him because he was the founder of the Shang Dynasty and wielded too much power.

The many problems experienced by the Shang Dynasty so far were just the beginning. More would definitely follow if Fang Yuan chose to go to their aid.

'Well, I could vow to cut off all ties with the Shang Dynasty and never help them again. However, the Ancient One would become even more difficult to handle when Western Zhou emerges victorious over the Shang Dynasty...'

Fang Yuan let out a long sigh.

'I'll be boarding a sinking ship and trying my best to keep it afloat. I wonder how the legendary [Grandmaster of Heaven](#) had once felt?'

Hei Zhong and Ge Nie watched the expressions shift on Fang Yuan's face. They did not dare to speak.

The fox sisters lay quietly at the side as well. They did not even dare to move.

'Forget it. The heavens might have made their decision but I will try my best to resist their will...'

Fang Yuan had made up his mind and broke out into a smile.

"A huge mess is going on all around us..."

At this point, the Shang state was still the most powerful state in the world with the largest army at its disposal. If Fang Yuan took over the Shang throne, he would make sure that Western Zhou never became a threat even after they had absorbed the Quanrong and Xiyi states.

"I'll have to make sure that...the heavenly will of this world has no way of directly turning the tides in their favour!"

Fang Yuan considered the strengths of the parties involved and got a better idea of his chances.

Not being able to directly turn the tides in their favour meaning that if Shang emerged victorious over Western Zhou, the Shang King would not be struck down by lightning, nor would the Shang army be destroyed by earthquakes or floods.

If the heavenly will of this world was capable of doing all of that, Fang Yuan would leave without a second word.

After all, the Ancient One had been forced out of the Da Qian World. Fang Yuan was fine with leaving this world empty-handed.

Besides, Fang Yuan would have much more to work with if he could only make sure that the heavenly will of this world only provided marginal support to the heavenly mandate.

'To change the general trend or to assassinate the Marquis would be suicide...what I can do is to tweak the little details and watch the combined effect of these alterations destroy Western Zhou's heavenly mandate!"

After Fang Yuan was done with his calculations, he no longer felt inclined to tour Western Zhou and started back to where he and

his companions had come from.

...

The Shang capital.

Prince Pan sheathed the iron sword he had been holding as one of his servants entered the room hurriedly. He frowned.

"What has happened? Why are you in such a rush?"

The messenger fell to his knees and delivered his message in a shaky voice.

"The Dongyi army has launched an invasion on our lands!"

"The Dongyi again?"

Although Prince Pan considered the Dongyi to be troublesome opponents, they were loosely organised and had a primitive culture. They were easily driven back and only required the occasional invasion to be kept in check.

However, they had been severely defeated in battle only recently and yet they were attacking again. It was unbelievable.

"How many of them are there?"

Prince Pan had identified the source of the messenger's distress with his question.

"Eight...eighty thousand!"

The messenger replied in a trembling voice. Prince Pan widened his eyes.

"Impossible!"

"My Prince, it's true! The Dongyi tribes have united as one and the leader of this alliance is the largest tribe among them all, the Jiuxiong Division. They have managed to raise an army of 80,000 and have crossed our borders..."

The messenger was crying as he spoke. Prince Pan dropped his sword into the ground.

"...This battle concerns the survival of the Shang Dynasty. The King has ordered a national drafting exercise and will lead the troops to battle personally!"

The messenger continued to speak as Prince Pan experienced inner turmoil.

'How did the various Dongyi tribes manage to achieve unity in so short a time?'

Thoughts swirled about in Prince Pan's head and made him dizzy.

'Something is wrong!'

Prince Pan shuddered.

'The most pressing issue right now is to dissuade Father from leading the troops himself!'

Prince Pan knew very well that if the Shang King appeared on the battlefield, it would be akin to telling the world that the imperial capital was lightly defended.

Besides, there was an inner voice telling him to take this opportunity and volunteer himself.

After all, he was not the crown prince. However, if he managed to achieve glory on the battlefield, he would be a few steps closer to the throne.

'If I were King, the Shang Dynasty would achieve greater heights!'

A fire began to burn in Prince Pan's heart.

No matter his destiny, he would take a gamble on it.

If Fang Yuan had been present, he would have seen dark energy gather around Prince Pan's body and forming the crooked shape of a bird. Even as the colourful lights of the void attempted to suppress its movements, the dark energy continued to resist them obstinately.

A peacock spirit who became King Zhou's (last king of Shang), general in Chinese mythology

an evil deity who sided with Shang King Zhou in the losing war against the Zhou

Chapter 566: Divine Power

Beyond the lands of Shangyi, peasants and slaves toiled on fields that had been partitioned in a disorderly but interesting manner.

"The Ancient One has fallen in with Western Zhou and I can't get rid of him. This is going to be tricky...I'll have to go against the heavenly will if I am to counter Western Zhou's tribal energy!"

Fang Yuan was prepared to test the limits of the heavenly will.

If Western Zhou managed to overthrow the Shang Dynasty, then so be it. Fang Yuan would accept the result and leave.

However, if there were loopholes for Fang Yuan to exploit, then he would try his best to kill the Ancient One!

If Fang Yuan did not manage to eliminate the Ancient One, there was no saying if he would come back to hurt Fang Yuan in the future. After all, the Ancient One used to be a powerful Sage.

"It would be nearly impossible to go against the general trend but we can tweak the details...the Tai God was the agglomeration of the will of all lifeforms in the world. He was the lofty personification of the heavenly dao and it would probably be far beneath him to interfere in mortal affairs. Nevertheless, it is better to make sure!"

Fang Yuan thought for a moment before instructing Hei Zhong and Ge Nie to sneak into the city and acquire the latest news. Fang Yuan then retreated to a quiet spot where he began to prepare for the looming battle through cultivation!

Before long, Ge Nie had found out about the mass conscription of male citizens and related the news to Fang Yuan.

"The Dongyi tribes, led by the Jiuxiong Division, have launched an invasion on the Shang Dynasty with an 80,000-strong army? The Shang King himself will be leading the Shang army to war?"

Fang Yuan stared into the distance with his eyes gleaming.

The shape of the Black Bird that was looming over the city had become smaller and more misshapen.

'It is obvious that even if the Shang won, it would be a pyrrhic victory!'

If the Shang Dynasty were to incur huge losses in the southern lands, Western Zhou would take the opportunity to advance into the Shang heartlands and take Shangyi, where they could then declare total victory over the Shang.

"This is the general trend! The heavenly will! Although it seems very crude and simplistic, it would be extremely difficult to alter its course!"

"If the battle between the Shang and Dongyi states is the general trend, would the generals involved as well as the casualty rate be considered the minor details?"

Fang Yuan turned his gaze towards the imperial palace.

The coming battle against the Dongyi would be a chance for him to test his hypotheses and obtain a better understanding of how the heavenly will in this world works. He would then be able to work within its limits.

"Anyway, it seems that there is one more person in Shangyi that warrants attention!"

...

Meanwhile.

In a large house within the grounds of Juxian Hall.

Young Master Wu read the news from Western Zhou with a look of contentment on his face.

"The Quanrong and Xiyi states have been defeated. The Western Zhou state has been strengthened as a result. This calls for a celebration...additionally, Father has received the heavenly

mandate as represented by the Penta-coloured rock, which subsequently transformed into a suit of armour and a sword. A divine beast had appeared as well?"

"Yes, Young Master. The appearance of the Phoenix in Qi Mountain can only mean that the heavens favour Western Zhou and that the Marquis now holds the royal mandate!"

Sir Zou looked slightly dazed.

If it were not for his present commitments, he would already have returned to Western Zhou.

"Western Zhou has received the heavenly mandate while the Shang has to deal with the Dongyi invasion..."

Young Master Wu paced up and down. The light in his eyes was becoming brighter.

"A pity...but I cannot leave now!"

As the hegemon, the Shang Dynasty had its methods to limit the powers of its vassal states. These included the tributary system where the feudal lords had to offer annual gifts, swear their allegiance and even live in Shangyi for a period of time. In other words, the feudal lords were being exploited and held hostage.

The Marquis of Western Zhou was already pushing the limits by only sending his heir to Shangyi. If even Young Master Wu left Shangyi, Western Zhou's intent to rebel would be clear.

If that happened, there was no saying if the Shang King Xin would react by attacking Western Zhou before dealing with the Dongyi tribes.

"Sir Zou, return to Western Zhou and inform Father that I need to stay in Shangyi so as to gain the trust of the Shang King! In this way, I will be able to keep Father updated about the goings-on within Shang!"

Young Master Wu gritted his teeth. There was a look of

determination on his face.

"Alright! The Marquis would be happy to hear that!"

Sir Zou stroked his beard.

"Nevertheless, when the Shang army leaves to engage the Dongyi army, Young Master, you will have to leave then!"

This was a reminder to Young Master Wu, telling him that he had to escape when the Shang King let down his guard.

"These contributions will strengthen your status as the heir upon your return to Western Zhou!"

Suddenly, a voice came in from outside.

"Young Master, your servant Mo Ge requests an audience!"

A frown creased Young Master Wu's brow for a moment before it disappeared.

"Come in!"

"Greetings, Young Master. Through bribing the palace guards, I've learnt that although the Shang King had intended to lead the troops to battle himself, he was dissuaded by Prince Pan and has postponed making his decision!"

Mo Ge delivered his news hastily.

"Activate our men and make sure that they persuade King Xin to leave for battle at all costs!"

Young Master Wu made his decision without hesitation.

"Also, it would be best if Prince Pan accompanied the King!"

Among the sons of King Xin, Prince Pan was the oldest and most outstanding. Young Master Wu considered him to be a fierce rival.

Moreover, it would not benefit Western Zhou to have a Prince Regent running the Shang Empire in the place of King Xin.

The best case scenario was to have both King Xin and Prince Pan

set off for the battlefield, and die in battle!

As the future lord of Western Zhou, Young Master Wu did not lack in shrewdness.

He was like a young dragon waiting for his chance to rush up into the heavens and fulfil his destiny. That is, to become a true dragon!

...

In the Shang imperial palace, Fang Yuan walked among the servants undetected. It was as if they were blind.

"Bad omens precede the fall of a state! As the Shang empire weakens, its energy becomes weaker as well, resulting in the protective spells around the palace becoming less effective, or at least not effective enough to expose me!"

A layer of dream elemental energy enveloped Fang Yuan as he roamed the palace freely.

"Of course...even if the Shang empire was at its peak, its tribal energy wouldn't be able to keep me out all the same..."

Fang Yuan walked on until he came to the ancestral temple of the Shang Dynasty.

According to the rules, the royal family was allowed to build nine ancestral temples, the feudal lord families seven temples, the other noble-ranked families five temples and so on. This was a testament to the importance of rites and hierarchy in the Shang era.

As the hegemon, the Shang royal family was the only family allowed to build nine ancestral temples.

Fang Yuan could feel the tribal energy of the Shang ebbing away, which was similar to the dying of the light at sunset.

Of course, Fang Yuan only noticed because he had been looking out for it. It was also thanks to his Fiery Golden Eyes.

If it had been other energy readers, they would only see the strictness of the law and the calling of the [Black Bird](#). To them, the

Shang would still be as unshakeable as before.

"In truth...a 500-year reign is more than respectable. The empire that I will establish in the future probably would not even last half as long as the Shang Dynasty..."

Fang Yuan let out a faint sigh. He was thinking about Fang Mountain, the tribes and more.

He extended a hand.

"Chirp! Chirp!"

A dark energy emerged and revolved around his palm. It took the form of a Black Bird and was strangely endearing.

A large amount of information assailed Fang Yuan's senses and he understood everything in a flash.

"I see!"

When Fang Yuan had founded the tribes and worshipped heaven and earth, he had ended up worshipping the future Tai God and Lady Nuwa. Thus, his accumulated merit had allowed him to be favoured by destiny and create the tribal energy!

The tribal energy of the Shang Dynasty was represented by the Black Bird. The Black Bird had delivered the heavenly mandate to the Shang a long time ago and had led the people of the Shang Dynasty towards prosperity.

Strictly speaking, the tribal energy as represented by the Black Bird had been created by Fang Yuan and his mastery of it exceeded that of the Shang Kings!

"The fate of the Shang Dynasty has a seventy per cent reliance on heavenly will and twenty per cent on human actions. Does the final ten per cent lie with me?"

Fang Yuan did not know what to feel about this.

"Who goes there? How dare you trespass on the ancestral temple?"

A figure emerged from the temple and examined Fang Yuan tentatively.

His hair was sparse and his face was heavily wrinkled. He wore a black robe that did not cover his chest fully, revealing his skinny torso. Strings of bone beads and feathers hung all over his body and his face was covered in greenish-purple patterns.

"Are you...a witch?"

Fang Yuan revealed himself and looked at the Black Bird perched on his arm.

He would not have been discovered if the tribal energy had not gathered around him.

For this person to be able to detect changes in the tribal energy, he had to be the head priest of the Shang Dynasty, also known as the Great Witch. This person had also detected the presence of the purple energy from the beginning.

"Ah!"

The Great Witch fell to his knees in terror upon seeing the Black Bird on Fang Yuan's arm.

"Which of the old Shang Kings are you? Your Majesty!"

The Black Bird was synonymous with the dragon aura. It was the definitive mark of the Shang King.

Needless to say, Fang Yuan had control over the true source of the energy, pure and dense. Upon seeing this, the witch had thought that the spirit of one of the dead Shang Kings had descended upon the world once more.

Fang Yuan was the founder of the Shang Dynasty and the Great Witch was not wrong in calling him a King.

"My King, you are powerful and resourceful. You have managed to break through the barriers and return to the mortal realm...there is hope for the Shang Dynasty after all!"

The Great Witch began to tear up.

The Great Witch was keenly aware of the crisis the Shang Dynasty had fallen into. Now that Fang Yuan had appeared, the Great Witch had taken him to be one of the dead Shang Kings who had returned to save the day.

Nevertheless, the Great Witch found it strange that Fang Yuan's appearance did not match any of the past Shang Kings.

There was no issue, however, thanks to the presence of the Black Bird and tribal energy. Even Shang King Xin himself would have to address Fang Yuan respectfully.

"I..."

Fang Yuan had barely opened his mouth when he suddenly sensed danger.

'Did more limitations come with the mastery of the Shang tribal energy?'

Fang Yuan was silent for a moment before uttering a few words quickly.

"The King cannot lead the army to war personally!"

The heavenly trend dictated that the Shang Dynasty had to go to war with the Dongyi state and there was no escaping it! However, the commander of the Shang army remained subject to change.

Whether King Xin was virtuous or foolish, his fate was sealed when he had ascended the throne. Going to the south would not change anything for him.

It was the princes who had fighting chances!

Fang Yuan had found the critical point when he sensed danger and did what he could to change the course of events.

"Yes!"

The Great Witch bowed deeply.

"The ancestor has decreed...that the King must not lead the army into battle personally! Be rest assured that I will inform the King!"

'It is done!'

Fang Yuan concealed himself again and quickly left.

His mastery of the tribal energy, as well as everything he said or did, gave him immense pressure.

Still, it was enough.

The only thing that could override royal power was divine power as well as the decrees of an ancestor! Fang Yuan was certain that the Great Witch would be able to convince the Shang King successfully.

A mythical beast said to be the ancestor of the Shang

Chapter 567: A Chance of Survival

"The Shang King intends to stay in Shangyi and let Prince Pan lead the army to war instead?"

A savage look came over Young Master Wu's face upon hearing this piece of news.

"How did things turn out this way?"

Mo Ge broke out into a cold sweat.

He had never seen Young Master Wu fly into a rage before and fell to his knees.

"Please have mercy on me, Young Master. I have followed your instructions and bribed the personal attendants of the King to convince him to lead the Shang army into battle himself. The Shang King was rather determined to do so until he met with the Great Witch..."

"The Great Witch?"

Young Master Wu looked apprehensive.

"So, it seems that...they had received a warning from the ancestral temple?"

"My sentiments exactly, Young Master. It is a pity that the Great Witch occupies a position of prestige and a mere common attendant would never be able to meet him..."

Mo Ge talked on.

Little did he know the full extent of Young Master Wu's worries.

'Father has great ambitions and now that he has received the heavenly mandate, his powers grow by the day. However, Father is not ready yet. If the Shang King decides to launch an attack on Western Zhou, we would be ruined. We'll have to hope that they won't deviate from their plans to invade the Dongyi state....the wise and brilliant Prince Pan is a great rival of mine. Neither is the

Shang King a simple man. Leaving him in charge at Shangyi will definitely lead to a whole host of problems later on!

'Of course, Prince Pan poses a greater threat!'

Young Master Wu made up his mind.

"Take my personal token with you and request an audience with Sir Cao!"

"The Sword Sage Sir Cao?"

Mo Ge was taken aback. He had not expected his Young Master to be acquainted with Cao Qiu and wondered just how much did he actually know about his Young Master.

"The imperial palace is under the protection of the Great Witch and even Cao Qiu won't be able to break through its defences. Nevertheless, Prince Pan, as the commander of the Shang army, will have to leave the palace...Follow the Shang army to Dongyi together with Cao Qiu and bring me Prince Pan's head!"

Young Master Wu waved his hands as he spoke. He had a malevolent look on his face.

"Yes, Young Master!"

Mo Ge shuddered involuntarily. He could imagine the bloody scenes of the Shang army falling apart following the death of their commander-in-chief.

The Western Zhou army could then march on to Shangyi and try to secure a bloodless victory.

For now, however, Mo Ge kept his mouth shut and retreated meekly out of the room.

...

"King Xin has appointed Prince Pan as the commander of a 10000-strong army and tasked him to do battle with the Dongyi?"

Fang Yuan was reassured upon hearing this piece of news.

"Good...it seems like altering the details bit by bit is working pretty well!"

Fang Yuan was more than aware of what he could and could not do within the limits of the heavenly will.

Acts like imposing direct control on the Shang King or killing the Marquis of Western Zhou would result in divine retribution!

On the other hand, giving the Shang Dynasty cheat codes and helping them to fly up the technology tree through things like introducing gunpowder to the regime, would result in retaliatory responses from the goddess Nuwa!

"These trump cards should only be used as last resorts. As of now, it would still be better to go with the flow!"

Fang Yuan turned to look his two disciples.

"If there are too many implications resulting from my direct involvement in these affairs, I run the risk of having my plans backfire on myself. I should send my disciples to act on my behalf instead!"

"I might not be able to directly assist Prince Pan in coming up with plans and strategies, but I can supply talent to him!"

Fang Yuan knew that this world treated aliens like himself differently from its natives. If it was the native men who acted, the heavenly will and the goddess Nuwa would not have any excuses to interfere in their affairs.

"What I can do now is to observe the proceedings and strengthen my powers!"

Fang Yuan waved a hand. A sword of fire and a sword of water materialised.

By focusing on his own recovery for the past few days, Fang Yuan had managed to create another divine sword. He was also beginning to realise that the Creation Sword Array was many

times more powerful than the 9 Gates Sword Array!

Besides, the divine swords were sentient and could attack of their own free will!

"This is how it feels like to have gone past the 4th Tier of the Illusionary Divine Stage...I had not expected an Illusionary Divine dream master to become more powerful after having his foundations recast!"

Fang Yuan reflected on what he had learnt.

Now, by purely using dream elemental energy for his recuperation, Fang Yuan realised that the two swords had already attained a level of power that was at the 4th Tier of the Illusionary Divine stage!

"What kind of power would I be looking at if I went on to the 7th Tier of the Illusionary Divine stage?"

Fang Yuan felt a fire burning in his heart. He called his two disciples over.

"Hei Zhong, Ge Nie!"

"Yes, master!"

The two men bowed and gazed at Fang Yuan's handiwork with admiration.

Fang Yuan manipulated the swords through the air. It was magical.

"The both of you have become rather proficient in the Great Yin Technique. I will impart a chant to each of you, which will allow you to control these divine swords. Prince Pan is leading the Shang army eastwards. Go join his ranks!"

Fang Yuan muttered a few words that he made up on the spot and passed them off as the chants that would control the swords. In truth, he had only needed to change the user permissions for the swords. He passed the sword of fire to Hei Zhong and the sword of

water to Ge Nie.

"Your mission will be to assist the Shang Dynasty in its endeavours and accumulate good karma. This will be very useful to your cultivation!"

"Yes, master!"

Ge Nie and Hei Zhong received their swords. They were slightly confused but bowed in acknowledgement to Fang Yuan's words all the same.

"Swish!"

The light shining from the swords dimmed when they fell into Ge Nie's and Hei Zhong's hands. Nevertheless, a cold aura emanating from them. They were indeed divine in nature.

The art of the Illusionary Divine was based on creating real objects from illusions. The swords of fire and water that Fang Yuan had created were very real and would last for hundreds of thousands of years.

Of course, it did not matter even if the swords got damaged. The core of their being remained within Fang Yuan's dream world and they could always be recast.

Fang Yuan's mind shared a mental link with the consciousness of the swords. This made it easy for him to manipulate his two disciples and allowed him to constantly adapt his plans to the changing circumstances.

Nonetheless, there was no need to tell his two disciples these things.

"...Hei Zhong and Ge Nie are skilled and brave warriors, but they are not exceptional thinkers...they know how to fight but what I need now is someone who can plan and come up with strategies!"

After Fang Yuan had sent his two disciples away, he went on an aimless stroll around Shangyi with his foxes.

Ever since he had regained part of his dream master abilities, the arrest warrant placed on his head had become something of a joke.

"Prince Pan may have replaced the King in leading the army, but the danger remains. I need a backup plan!"

Fang Yuan muttered under his breath.

"The energy in the form of the Black Bird may have become misshapen, but it still has a chance of survival...this corresponds with my memories of civilisation in the previous world that I was in!"

Although the Ancient One was a sly fellow and had fused his own destiny with that of Western Zhou, Fang Yuan still had the upper hand.

This was because the Ancient One did retain the memories of the previous world that they were in and would have no idea about the progression of the general trend!

"From what I remember about this history of the previous world, King Wu of Zhou took the opportunity to invade the Shang capital. The Shang King, taken by surprise, was eventually defeated and committed suicide. Thus, Western Zhou officially received the heavenly mandate and lorded over the world!"

"This world had obviously been affected by the radiation from a high-dimensional civilisation, which explains the many similarities in its history! Even with the interference of the dream masters and the butterfly effects, the course of events would remain largely unchanged!"

Perhaps it was because the extent radiation was different, which might account for the difference in the historical timelines of the two worlds. This would give Fang Yuan the chance to reflect and revise.

"However, this war between Shang and Western Zhou did not result in an eternal victory for the [Ji family](#)...in the history of the

previous world, Zhou eventually declined, giving way to the Spring and Autumn era. Later, the Qin King Ying Zheng, a descendant of the Black Bird and a scion of the Shang, achieved reunification and became Emperor. The ancestor of the Qin monarchs is...Fei Lian?"

Prince Pan was destined to fail and there was no way to avoid it. However, the bloodline of the Black Bird remained unbroken and even managed to establish a regime that achieved the reunification of the world! The descendants of the Black Bird were the final victors!

After that, the glory of these semi-legendary clans disintegrated and gave way to the rise of mortal men.

"The last chance of survival of the Shang lies here!"

Fang Yuan was quiet for a moment.

Fang Yuan planned to use the destiny of the Qin to boost the destiny of the Shang. This would shake the foundations of the general trend and yet not break any the rules.

Fang Yuan arrived before a house and dropped his disguise.

"The aura of the Black Bird is failing and the Shang families are suffering. This house might be in a poor state but upon closer inspection, I sense its budding potential! This must be it!"

Fang Yuan entered the yard and saw that two strapping men were packing up some armour and weapons. There were slaves arming themselves as well. They were obviously preparing to follow Prince Pan into war.

They were all startled when they saw Fang Yuan enter through the door.

"Who are you?"

The strapping young man roared and raised the bronze hammer that he was holding. The hammer looked like it weighed more than a hundred pounds and yet he waved it about like it was a toy.

Fang Yuan had read about a certain Lian and his son, [Er](#) from the classics in the previous world. These names suddenly came to his mind.

Fang Yuan stared at him. A light flashed across his eyes.

"Who are you?"

"I am the son of Gentleman Lian, Er!

Er brandished his hammer.

"You are...Jie?" The swordsman who had defeated Sir Cao and is now wanted by the King? Why are you here?"

'Indeed, it is the two of you!'

Fang Yuan was relieved. He knew that father and son were both generals of the Shang Dynasty and were about to set off for war.

It was a pity that both of them would lose their lives in the [Battle of Muye](#), according to Fang Yuan's knowledge of the previous world's history.

After all, the Shang Dynasty was destined to fall.

The next few generations of this family would lead difficult lives as horse breeders in the employment of the Zhou Kings. However, one of these horse breeders would finally be awarded the small fief of Qin, which would one day blossom into the Qin empire.

"That's right!"

Fang Yuan nodded with a smile.

"So what...are you going to haul me to the King and claim your reward?"

"Er, wait!"

A large middle-aged man stepped out.

"You may leave...I, Lian, hold heroes in high regard. You are a Shang citizen like me. I hope that you will never antagonise the Shang again!"

"Hehe..."

Fang Yuan shook his head and looked towards the houses. A few little faces peeked out from the windows but quickly withdrew following admonishment from a woman.

"I have brought a little gift for you all!"

Fang Yuan nodded as he stretched out his hand and invoked the tribal energy of the Black Bird. The energy drifted and shifted before it diffused into the heads of Lian and his family members.

'I have no use for the tribal energy of the Shang and might as well give it away! Besides, if this doesn't work, I could preserve my elemental energy and bide my time.'

Royal surname of the Zhou Dynasty

The correct pinyin for this character's name is supposed to be 'E' but we changed it to 'Er' to make it less strange

The Final battle between the Shang and Zhou, which led to the Shang being replaced by the Zhou

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